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THE

DAYS OF DANIEL BOONE

A ROMANCE

OF

"THE DARK AND BLOODY GROUND."

BY

FRANK H. NORTON.

NEW YORK

THE NEW YORK PUBLISHING COMPANY,

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1883

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P R E F A C E.

THE subject of American History has been, comparatively, but little drawn upon to form a basis for American Fiction.

Yet, a little reflection will show that the history of no other country offers more obvious or more frequent opportunities for just such application ; and it is matter for surprise that American romance writers have not more generally utilized the archives of their country in their professional work.

In the present volume, the author has entered this promising field, selecting for his subject a character, a section of country, and a period of which but little is generally known to American readers.

In undertaking to write a Romance of the Life and Times of Daniel Boone, the author's design has not been to write history. This explanation is necessary for such persons only as are accustomed to glean their knowledge of the history of France from Alexander Dumas *père* and Charles Lever ; and that of Germany from Miss Mühlbach.

To cater to any such misconception of the real uses of this class of literary work, is not the purpose of Historical Fiction.

On the contrary, while the author has in many in-

stances in the course of his work employed actual historical occurrences and personages, it has been, designedly, in such wise that the reader should not be able to discern where the truth ended and the fiction began.

The purpose has been in this narrative to interest the reader in the character of Daniel Boone, by picturing him as he is authentically presented by history associated with events, historical or fictitious, always regarding the possibilities if not the probabilities of his life; but always holding the chief object to be the amusement and not the instruction of the reader. While, therefore, historical facts when given have been given accurately; and while Boone himself, and other personages who were actually associated with his life, have been described, and their characters and acts set forth, as nearly as was practicable, with historic truth: the reader is desired to remember that this is a Romance, bearing the same relation in literature to the facts of history, that in art is borne by the artist's painting of an historical composition, in its relation to the occurrence it is meant to signify rather than to depict.

Deprecating no just and reasonable criticism of his work, the highest praise of its construction to which the author's ambition aspires, may be best indicated by the Italian expression—

"Se non è vero, è ben trovato."

FRANK H. NORTON.

ZDGEWATER-ON-THE-HUDSON

October, 1883.

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THE DAYS OF DANIEL BOONE.

CHAPTER I.

to which the Reader is introduced to Daniel Boone, and is made acquainted with the condition of his Majesty's Colony of North Carolina, in the year of our Lord 1768.

"THEN yer won't jine us?"

"No, Harmon; I don't think it would be—so to speak—consistent."

"Consistent? what's that?"

"Well, yer see, the Judge is a kind of a friend of mine, an' I haven't—not quite—the notion that I could go agin him in a matter where the law's with him."

"Yer makin' a mistake, Dan'l, an' it'll mayhap be the worse fur yer."

The speaker, as he said this, looked significantly at several men who stood near by, and who seemed to be scanning the two who were conversing.

His companion turned his eyes in the same direction and gazed for a moment; then he smiled, and lifting the rifle which had been held loosely in his hand, brought it to his shoulder, turning entirely about as he did so, and discharged it in the air. Those standing near looked to see what was being shot, and a hawk

fell from somewhere, seemingly out of sight, to a point a few yards distant from the marksman.

"Yer must have eyes in the top of yer head, Dan'l, to have seen that fellow, for I go bail yer never turned."

He was reloading his gun and merely said: "One *feel's* a critter near him, after much living in the open--Injins, b'ars, an' sich--and I kinder hate hawks." And quietly shouldering his rifle he strode across the green.

He was a tall man, in the first prime of life, strongly but not heavily built; his face and neck bronzed by constant exposure to the weather; his movements not rapid, but firm and apparently wary. His countenance was attractive, though somewhat stern and somber. He was dressed in a buckskin hunting-suit, to his belt being attached a sheath in which was his dangerous-looking long hunting-knife, while from his shoulder hung his powder-horn and bullet-pouch.

The first impression that his appearance would make upon the mind of the observer, would be that of confidence; the next, of reticence.

His companion was a thick-set, red-faced man of forty-five years, or thereabouts, with closely-cropped hair, and features strongly marked--partly by evil passions, partly by the results of dissipation. Remaining still for a moment after the other had left him, and observing his tall form as it moved lightly across the grass, he gave vent to an oath; then he joined the party who had been regarding these two.

"Well, Harmon Cox, what says he?" cried one of these, a slim man, with iron-gray hair and pallid features

‘He says he’ll have naught to do with you nor yer ways, an’ be damned to him. An’ he says more, ye’re no better than Injins and b’ars, and a heap worse nor hawks’; and so speaking, he kicked the carcass of the dead bird which lay before him, and looked to see what the others thought of his message.

The three or four men whom he had joined were all armed, and all clad in various kinds of homespun—various as to antiquity and consequent tint—relieved occasionally by the presence of a buckskin hunting-shirt, trimmed with a fringe of the same.

They were all preoccupied in their manner, and their faces wore a stern and determined expression, as though they contemplated some action of import, either in the past or in the future. Among them the one who had questioned Harmon Cox appeared to be in authority, and the others regarded him curiously after the delivery of the lying speech which Cox had given as that of the tall hunter.

“Did he say that?” queried the elder man.

The other looked away, and spat on the ground, as he answered: “Didn’t I say so? I ain’t before the Judge, an’ I ain’t answerable for every word, but it was nigh to that as one could remember.”

“It ain’t like Dan’l to talk like that ere,” put in a red-headed young man who was amusing himself throwing his hunting-knife into a tree before him.

“Ain’t it like him?” sneered the other. “Well, then, he’s been talkin’ to me onlike himself, for I swar he used every word—Injin, an’ b’ar, an’ hawk.”

The elder man had been looking and listening ; now he said : “ Harmon, he may have said the words, but I misdoubt if he ever used them after that fashion ; but since he’s against us—and it’s easy to see that’s so—why, he’ll have to take the chances.”

“ An’ that’s jest exactly what I told him.”

.

The period was the year of our Lord 1768. The scene was the town of Hillsborough, in the province of North Carolina, of the North American Colonies of his Majesty George the Third, “ by the grace of God King of Great Britain and Ireland.” King, also, by “ the accident of an accident ”—of such secondary matters as a baker’s dozen of broad provinces three thousand miles across the ocean, and another baker’s dozen of millions of loyal subjects thereunto pertaining.

George the Third was King in England, and Louis the Fifteenth was King in France. The one an obstinate imbecile, destined to plunge his country into irretrievable disaster, and die miserably at last, a hopeless lunatic ; the other an infamous and degraded sensualist, who robbed his people that his pleasures might be sustained, and who perished, victim to a loathsome disease, while his subjects held gleeful festivities in honor of his departure from the world he had disfigured.

These two Kings swayed all of North America that had as yet been bought, stolen, or wrested from the native Indian owners. They were men who, in the ordinary walks of life, would have attracted literally no attention ; save that one might have perished a drunken

vagabond in the slums of Havre or Marseilles; and the other have comfortably passed his existence as a Cheap-side haberdasher, and retained the limited senses which had been granted him until he died in his bed respected and forgotten.

Such are the wonderful dispensations of Providence.

Had George III. and Louis XV. been different from what they were, the political and social complexion of Europe and America would have been widely different from what they are. But such as they were, they had already succeeded in turning their loyal North American subjects into a grumbling, unhappy, and rebellious people, in which condition, and for various direct and subordinate reasons, the good folks of the province of North Carolina, especially, were seething and boiling at the time when the present narrative begins. It was March, 1768, and court was to be held in the town of Hillsborough.

Here, in the midst of the more thickly populated part of the province, the usually scattered settlement had drawn closer together, and the outlying farms centered upon the market-place, and the small, low building where court was held. It was a quiet, peaceful little town, where, usually, nothing more exciting than the ordinary farm gossip disturbed the community; but where, on this March morning, there appeared to be that stirring, which, judging from the gloomy and in some instances savage countenances about, might presently waken a storm.

Lounging about the court-house, the school-house

on the other side of the Common, and the store where Roderick McCandless dispensed his wares, were collected in groups of from five to twenty, quite three hundred people. They were nearly all men, clad in homespun, some with short stock-whips in their hands, a few with the customary flint-lock rifle, while variety was given to the scene by a half-dozen plainly-clad women, who stood apart, in animated conversation. Within the small room which was sacred to the sessions of the Circuit Court, were to be seen standing in groups, or looking out of window, a number of persons whose appearance betokened a higher position in life than would have been expected from that of the populace without. Conspicuous among them, seated on a slightly raised platform, was a man of marked presence, and who was obviously a person of eminence in the community. This man was Col. Richard Anderson, Judge of the Superior Court of North Carolina, who had come to Hillsborough to hold court. Those about him were the leading farmers of the neighborhood, court officials, sheriff, tax-gatherers, and others of the more well-to-do of the population.

They were all engaged in earnest though desultory conversation, and as in the case of those without the building, all seemed impressed with the serious nature of the questions which were under discussion.

No. to be too historical in our relation, it may be briefly stated that for several years matters in North Carolina had been approaching a culmination of outbreak which was now immediately threatening. The con-

trol of public affairs in the hands of the royalist officials had become obnoxious to a large proportion of the population, and the aspect had been growing constantly more threatening. As is common in colonies and in new countries in general, appointments to high office, with vast opportunity for doing public injury, had been vested in persons of unscrupulous character, only too willing to avail themselves of such opportunities whenever offered. Minor positions had been similarly filled by the creatures and tools of those who appointed them, and the result had become so distasteful to the poorer inhabitants, as to awaken a spirit of bitter resentment against their oppressors.

An additional occasion for popular ill-feeling at this period, was the fact that the greater part of the wealth of the Colony was in the hands of these objectionable officials, or in those of the Scotch and other traders and store-keepers, between whom and the farmers and hunters there was always debt, and consequently always ill-blood.

Besides, these traders and others lived in a style quite beyond the ability of the mass of the people, indulging in luxuries unknown to them, and thereby constantly awakening jealousies which had at length turned to pure hatred, and now only needed an incident and an opportunity for dangerous manifestation.

It was to the very center and hot-bed of all this malignant sentiment that Judge Anderson had come to hold the regular court; and the presence of far more than the usual number of loungers about the court.

house, as well as the appearance of a threatening demeanor in the case of most of them, may also be thus accounted for.

The hunter who had been spoken to by the name of "Dan'l," had directed his steps toward the court-house after the incident we have recounted, but he was stopped and addressed by several on his way, and so it chanced that the pallid man with iron-gray hair, who had questioned Harmon Cox, reached that point before him.

Entering the open door, this man threaded his way through the groups standing about, until he faced Judge Anderson. At the same moment it might have been observed that there was a general movement among all the men on the green and lounging about the buildings, and that at once the general interest had centered in the court-house.

Observing who had approached him, the Judge addressed him: "Well, Stephen Roberts, what would you have?"

"Judge, is our case against that fellow McCandless to come to trial this term?"

"My directions from the Governor are not to recognize any case on the part of your people against his Majesty's officials."

There was a movement on the utterance of this statement, and loud murmurs were heard in all directions as its nature was carried from one to another.

Roderick McCandless, the thrifty Scotch shop-keeper opposite the court-house, had held from the Crown the appointment of local tax-gatherer for a year past, and

in that capacity had managed to make himself obnoxious to the entire community, even to an extent not common to tax-gatherers. It was hinted about and generally believed that he had succeeded in drawing from the people, in the way of taxes, far more than was legal, and that his returns by no means represented his collections. As his case, though flagrant, was but one of many of the same nature, it had been made a test, and, backed up by a number of the Hillsborough people, was being sought to be prosecuted through a motion to call for the examination of McCandless' books in behalf of the Crown.

The motion was perfectly regular, having been made by Stephen Roberts, himself educated as a lawyer, and was in proper form—and no little surprise was evinced when Judge Anderson announced his intention to refuse it a hearing. Some, even, of those standing about him, and who had themselves somewhat to fear in the case of trouble, remonstrated with him regarding his determination. But to all he turned a deaf ear, replying shortly, though pleasantly enough, that he had his instructions and must comply with them, and that no case presented by the so-called "Regulators" could be recognized.

Perceiving the impossibility of moving the Judge, Roberts quietly left the court-house. Outside he was joined by Cox and a number of others, and a hasty conference was held.

While this was going on—and it had taken but a very few moments—the hunter had entered the court-

house, and could be seen talking earnestly to Judge Anderson, who listened attentively, but evidently without being impressed or induced to change his intention.

The Judge presently rose, the hunter retiring from him as he did so, and was about to give the direction to clear the court-room, preparatory to opening court. At this moment an accidental occurrence precipitated what followed, and entirely changed the aspect of affairs—and for the worse.

There was heard a confusion of sounds in the direction of the store, and a rush was made thitherward by the crowd without. Then a child cried out, a man's voice sounded in loud altercation, and the burly form of Roderick McCandless, himself, was seen emerging from his premises.

His appearance was not prepossessing. He was sandy-haired, high-cheek-boned, freckled, and pock-marked. He was tall and gaunt, and his low forehead and snapping eyes gave him a mean expression. At present he held by the shoulder a small boy, whom he shook with more vigor than seemed necessary, and who bawled lustily.

"Whose child is it?" queried the Judge, as he arrested his action for a moment, disturbed by the outcry.

"It is Daniel Boone's," replied the person addressed.

Hearing that, the tall hunter turned sharply about, took in the situation at a glance, and the next moment was striding across the green in the direction of the infuriated Scotchman and his prey.

He said nothing as he approached him, but passing his rifle from one hand to the other, with his disengaged right arm gave McCandless a single buffet that flung him staggering to the ground, while, at the same moment, he dexterously rescued the little boy from his clutches.

There was a wild howl of triumph and derision from the crowd, and the fallen trader was at once pitched upon and kicked and tossed from one to the other, each and all having grievances enough for which to bestow upon the unhappy victim each his separate blow.

But the Scotchman was not without his friends and adherents, as a man who made his money easily and knew how to distribute it to advantage must needs have. And first his men and underlings in the store rushed to his aid, and then as the fight became general others gathered from various points, summoned hastily to aid the Crown officers, and what at first seemed no more than a petty quarrel, assumed the proportions of a riot.

Stones were used freely, and clubs, and then the sharp ping of a rifle was followed by the report of a horse-pistol, and the crash of broken glass, yells of rage, and cries of pain made a noise frightful to hear.

At the beginning, Judge Anderson, followed by the Sheriff and other court officers, had hurried to the scene; and the man whom they called Daniel Boone, having left his child in a place of safety, had returned and joined them.

"Why did he quarrel with the child, Boone?" asked the Judge.

"I have no knowledge, Judge; he was ill-treating the boy, and I took him away from him. But I did not think it would make this disorder."

"Oh, that has nothing to do with it; or, rather, is only an excuse. They have been itching to get at old McCandless for a year past, and I only hope they'll spare his life. Ha! they're taking to fire-arms; this must be stopped."

And so saying, the whole party rushed into the midst of the fracas.

The Scotchman was being badly handled, but he was not killed, and it was Boone's own strong arms that lifted his battered and bloody form from among the trampling feet of the "Regulators."

He was a repulsive-looking object enough, with his hair matted with blood and dirt, his eyes bloodshot, a terrible gash in one cheek, and blood flowing freely from what seemed to be a knife or tomahawk wound in the right shoulder, and which disabled that arm. He was, however, plucky enough, and seemed ready to rush upon his assailants, who had retired a little from the attack of the new-comers. But at that moment the cries rose higher than ever, and it became apparent that a new victim had been discovered.

This was, in fact, no other than the Sheriff himself, Caleb Glennie by name, who, by the vigor with which he had prosecuted distraining for non-payment of taxes or for ordinary debt, had won for himself a name by

which he was held up to general execration. His appearance in the train of the Judge had been the signal for a general rush in his direction. He was seized, dragged from the protection of his associates, and in another moment the trembling wretch was standing beneath a tree, while one of the Regulators fastened a rope to an overhanging branch, the pending noose having been first deftly swung over the Sheriff's head, and drawn tightly about his neck.

"Egad! you're a good hangman—see how you like it yourself."

"Ye'll be wishin' ye might be distrained in a minute, Cale."

"Rise the thievin' villain! up now, an' make haste about it!"

And with such cries, the rope was suddenly drawn, and the wretch swung several feet in the air.

At that instant the crack of a rifle was heard; the rope, pierced by the bullet, snapped in twain, and Caleb Glennie fell to the ground—where he had both sense and strength enough to escape as fast as his legs would carry him, to where the smoking rifle of Daniel Boone showed him his saviour.

The execrations of the disappointed Regulators were loud and deep, and a movement was made to intercept the runaway, but just then an unexpected diversion changed their minds.

Smoke was seen coming out of McCandless' store in huge volumes, while a crowd rushing in and out of it, bore from it every article they could lay their hands

upon. Tobacco, whisky, jerked meat, powder and balls, fire-arms, knives and tomahawks—every article that was of value to the frontiersman, or that tickled his fancy, was to be found in quantity in the Scotchman's store, and was now eagerly seized by the incendiaries.

But the affair had by this time aroused the attention of the entire neighborhood; and fearing for their own homes, and having no particular interest with the Regulators, who came mostly from other settlements, the towns-people gathered in force and supported Judge Anderson and his friends and subordinates in quelling the riot. They speedily outnumbered the rioters, and in less than half an hour the latter had begun to retreat. But before they went, they made a simultaneous attack on the Judge, raising loud cries as they rushed upon him: "You shall hold no court here to deal out injustice!" "We're keepin' watch of you, Dick Anderson; look out for your big barn some of these fine nights!"

The Judge was plucky and determined, but he was unarmed, and had not Boone and others closely guarded him and accompanied him to his horse, he could not have saved himself from the fury of the attacking party.

With the half-executed Sheriff clinging timorously to his side, Boone shouldered his way past the rioters, having the Judge close behind him, while a dozen or more of their friends kept the way clear, striking right and left with whatever they chanced to have in their hands.

Beneath a low shed next the meeting-house, were

tied the horses of the party, and here, too, was Boone's son, a boy of twelve years, or thereabouts, in the care of an old negro to whom he had been hurriedly given over by the hunter for safe keeping.

It was the work of a moment to mount their horses, Boone taking his boy behind him, and as a wild yell from the discomfited Regulators filled the air, the whole party rode rapidly away in the direction of the adjoining county of Granville, where was Judge Anderson's residence, and to which section all of his party **excepting Boone, belonged.**

CHAPTER II.

Wherein Boone becomes the guest of Judge Anderson, and an important matter is considered ; and which presents Rafe Slaughter to the Reader, as a character not unworthy of study.

IT was nightfall of the day following that of the exciting events in Hillsborough, and Daniel Boone and Judge Anderson were seated in the handsome library of the latter, in his residence in Granville County.

The Judge was a man of large private fortune, while his official position gave him not only high standing, but afforded him frequent opportunities of adding to his wealth. He was possessed of a most enterprising and energetic nature, and a mind peculiarly adapted for the conception and carrying out of large schemes, and difficult and even dangerous operations. He had been on intimate terms with Boone ever since the latter had come to North Carolina to live, being well acquainted also with his father, who, about fifteen years prior to the period of this narrative, had brought his family to the banks of the Yadkin, where they still resided

Though old farmer Boone had several sons, the Judge had become chiefly interested in Daniel who had at an early age shown an adventurous disposition, and the reticence and decision which still characterized him.

and which were qualities that strongly appealed to the thoughtful, scheming man of the world, ever on the lookout for instruments to conduct his ideas to a successful conclusion.

In fact, having all this in his mind, he had sent a message to Boone's home on the Yadkin, requesting his presence at Hillsborough, at term time, for a conference. Boone happened to be at home when the message arrived—and this was by no means a common occurrence with a man who only felt that he lived when he was in the wilderness—and having nothing immediately in view in the way of action, he very willingly set forth on horseback to meet the Judge.

At the latter's request, too, he had accompanied him to Granville, where they had but just arrived at the point we reach in the present chapter.

Judge Anderson farmed extensively, employing a large number of hands to prosecute the work, and overseeing it himself when his professional duties would permit.

His residence was one of the finest in the country, or indeed in the whole Colony. A large frame house, substantially built in a plain style of architecture, the apartments were generally of great size, and were furnished with everything that lavish wealth and a luxurious taste could combine to bring together.

The room in which the two were now sitting was smaller than the others, and was more plainly furnished, while the walls were lined with oaken shelves containing what seemed to be a most promising library.

A hearty supper had refreshed the travelers, who now sat beside a handsome oak library-table, engaged in discussing the extraordinary events which had taken place at Hillsborough.

The contrast between the elegant figure of the Judge—who had taken time to array himself in faultless linen and rich broadcloth—and the massive form of the stalwart hunter, in his buckskin hunting-dress, was certainly broad enough, yet the latter did not by any means present an incongruous appearance amid his unwonted surroundings. No more, indeed, than would a knight in armor of a few centuries before, or a richly decked gallant *tempus Carolus Secundus*, in the same circumstances.

Boone sat, sedate and unperturbed, as was his custom, and looked about him without surprise and without concern. His idea of magnificence had never before been fostered by anything richer than the ordinary log-house of the frontiersman; or, at most, the commonplace residence of the townsman shop-keeper, with its garish show and want of taste. But, accustomed to the stupendous splendor of natural scenery, and the weird and lonely grandeur of a life in the wilds that only the savage and the buffalo frequented, no artificial creation or construction could readily confound him.

"Boone," said the Judge after a period of silence of some length, "it did not look well or right for us to fly from yon noisy and riotous knaves and thieves, now did it?" And he looked at the other, curiously, as he awaited his reply.

"Sometimes one has to run away; sometimes he makes others run; whichever is best to do is right. You might have seen me run a good number of miles, beyond Watauga, a twelvemonth since, if so be you had been there."

"Indians?"

"Shawnees."

"I could have done no good by staying," pursued the Judge, after a moment, returning to the subject; "and there was likely to be more trouble while the others who were with me remained—Glennie and that lot; the Hillsborough people don't like them—and no more do I, for that matter."

"Why consort with them, then, Judge?"

The latter looked surprised for a moment, and an amused smile passed over his countenance.

"That is something we can't 'regulate,' as the 'Regulators' say. His blessed Majesty's advisers, over across the water, have a way of appointing whom they please to position on this side, and we must agree, one with another, otherwise it will be the worse for us. But how is it, Boone, that these fellows have not drawn you in with them? I saw Roberts and Cox and one or two more of the leaders talking to you, and I suppose they were not merely inquiring after your health. Of course you know you can confide in me."

Boone was silent for a moment, apparently reflecting.

When he finally spoke, he drew nearer the table, and lowered his voice.

"You see, Judge, I'm very little about the settle

ments, and I ain't—I own up—what you might call neighborly. Still, I don't deny there have been some things said to me about grievances and such. Kinder leadin' up to something like what you mean. But I ain't cut out for that kind of schemin', conspirin' life. If I meet Injins, I know what to expect, if so be as they's onfriendly, and I act accordin'; but when it comes to towns-people and as to payin' taxes, and bein' swindled consarnin' deeds, I can't get up no sort of interest in it.

“An', Judge,” and here the hunter looked about him and dropped his voice to a hoarse whisper, while the Judge listened earnestly, “Judge, it ain't only round Hillsborough, an' consarnin' tax-gatherin' an' the like, that there's bad blood; it lies deeper 'n that. I hear a deal when I'm crossin' country, an' there's bitter feelin's that's got to come out afore we are ten years older.”

Anderson said nothing to this, but rose, and crossing the room, closed an open door. Returning he sat silent for a moment; then he spoke again.

“Do you know, Boone, when the matter of this riot comes up, you'll have to be indicted as one of the principals!”

The hunter raised his head and stared at him.

“Me? Why, Judge, if it hadn't been for me that mean Scotchman would ha' been pounded to pieces; an' your blackguard Sheriff, askin' your pardon, would ha' been food for the buzzards.”

“That's all so, and I'm not gainsaying it; but you

must admit you knocked McCandless down before another blow had been struck."

"For abusin' little Jimmy, there?"

"Yes, but don't you see, my friend, that the bare fact, related against you, would be very telling?"

Boone said nothing, but turned uneasily in his chair.

Presently he looked at the Judge, who immediately burst out laughing. Slapping the hunter familiarly on the shoulder, he said :

"Don't be disturbed, my friend, there are extenuating circumstances ; though I don't know that saving Cale Glennie from his just dues would be considered one of them ; but I only advert to the circumstance to offer a suggestion to you."

"And that is?"——

"That it would be just as well for you to take one of your famous trips into the West after I get through with what I shall have to say to you. There will be witnesses enough for the Crown and for the People without you, and I think there is not much danger of your being brought up on a criminal charge. But I will say you managed most beautifully to put yourself at enmity with both sides, and you will be much better off a good many miles away when the case comes up for examination."

"Thank yer, Judge, I'm quite of your opinion, an' it won't take me long to get ready to start off again—though I hev'n't any special object in going."

"Don't let that disturb you, Boone ! Before you undertake your next journey you shall not be without

a special object, that will at once stimulate your plans for self-interest, and your pride as a pioneer."

"My pride as a pioneer, Judge, ain't to be spoken of in this connection. To tell you the truth, I have had ~~very~~ little pride, except in the matter of killing Injuns. Now, there are people as imagine, I dare say, that those of us who go out in the wilderness fancy that we are very daring fellows; but any such conclusion is an error, Judge; we get that taken out of us soon, after we meet our first b'ar and tackle our first Injun, and all the pride that comes in afterwards, is that we have got a whole crop of hair on our heads and no bullet-holes through our carcasses.

"As for settled plans—I haven't any, Judge. I have led what my neighbors call a useless kind of life, tho' perhaps I don't think so, and I don't believe, altogether, that you would; not that these neighborly ideas affect me much.

"My theory of life may be a wrong one, but it is the only one I've got, an', right or wrong, I've got to come thro' on it. If I am not tiring you, I would just like to say a word or two on that subject, as we're on it, because I've got respect for your opinion, and it seems we may do business together."

The Judge had listened, apparently interested in all that the pioneer had said of himself, and now only remarked, by way of response: "Go right ahead, Boone. I like to hear you talk, because you are the kind of man who does not talk often, and generally has a good deal to say when the occasion comes up. Your theory

of life has certainly worked out a good result, and though it may not agree with mine exactly—for precisely that reason you may be the very man I want to carry out my own ideas.”

Boone looked as pleased as his usually unchangeable features would permit. He was, in fact, a man who expressed very little in his face, which was usually set in calm repose.

“Well, Judge, to go on—much of my life, as you know, has been passed in the wilderness with the Injuns and other savage creeturs, and I don’t harmonize exactly with my fellow-beings—not as well as might be useful to me—so I generally leave my farm and domestic concerns to the old woman, and to the boys, who are now getting up a little, an’ beginnin’ to do some-thin’, and when I get a chance I go to my business—which is what the neighbors call loafing.

“I do not agree with them—I need not say—and very few of them, or I miss my mark, would find it such a lazy life up Watauga way where I was last year, and where a man has to keep his faculties about him day an’ night, and his eyes very wide open when they are open, and his body active most of the time. There’s not much loafing about that.

“Meanwhile,” he continued, “traveling out there and taking a chance for game, or a shot at an Injun, wouldn’t be a very ambitious kind of life, I admit, and that is just where my theory comes in.

“To tell you the truth, Judge”—and here Boone leaned forward a little and held his forefinger impres-

sively in the air—"I always had a kind of idee that some men were planed out for certain kinds of work in this world, and kind of *drove* to take it whether they wanted to or not.

"So far as that goes, my theory of my kind of work, calls it pioneering, goin' ahead of the rest of the world and smoothin' the path, findin' out the dangers and makin' them scarcer, makin' it kind of easy, you know, for the weak-kneed, the young, an' the old, who go to build up the settlement afterwards. I do not know as there's any high callin' in that kind of work, or that it is anything to be proud of; but when I think of it at all I can not help thinkin' that it is useful."

As he said the last few words Boone leaned back in his chair again, and, crossing his legs, offered the appearance of a man who had concluded all that he had to offer on the subject in hand.

"You do not talk often, Boone," said the Judge, "but when you do talk, you say something.

"Your theory is a sound one, and shows an amount of philosophy that I would not have looked for in you. It has frequently occurred to me that certain men are marked out for certain fixed duties, having some relation to the general well-being. Decidedly those which you have taken upon yourself or which have fallen in your way, are of grave importance; and your course is the more satisfactory to me, because these duties coincide exactly with my own designs, in aiding which I think you may be a very efficient instrument."

"You are a long-headed man, Judge, and any ideas

you have will be worth something; and whatever I can do to help them along I will do as well as I know how."

At this moment the door of the room in which the two were sitting, opened to admit a man who was a stranger to Boone, but evidently far from being so to Judge Anderson, who arose as he entered and approached him with every sign in his manner of gratification and friendly interest.

"Rafe, I am glad to see you," he said; "when did you arrive, and how is everything at the mill?—but first, I must make you acquainted with my friend Daniel Boone."

As he said these words Boone rose from the chair, his tall form towering far above that of the new-comer.

The latter was an extraordinary-looking specimen of humanity; being at the same time a character destined to occupy a prominent position in this narrative.

Rafe Slaughter was a man well on in middle life, judging from the iron-gray that mixed with his coal-black hair, and from the lining of his features, which were marked and impressive. Still it was impossible to tell from his appearance exactly for how many years he had carried through life the remarkable structure which he exhibited.

Not much more than five feet in height, he was thin spare, and cadaverous. His face was long and very white, beardless and sallow. His hair hung in locks, lightly curled at the ends about his neck and over his forehead.

But his arms were the most remarkable part of his

anatomy, and their appearance at once caused him to assume a permanent position in the memory of even the most careless observer.

They extended some ways below his knees and showed at their extremities powerful hands, very white and long, and which gave an uncanny look to the whole figure. His legs were short and attenuated, his feet very small,—altogether he looked not so much like a malformed man as like an adroit imitation of humanity.

The time which has been taken in this description has been no greater than that which elapsed between the last remark of Judge Anderson and the next observation from any of the three.

The hunter stood dumb with astonishment at the sight of the strange figure before him.

The latter remained near the door, with his long arms hanging straight down by his sides, saying nothing; while the Judge silently enjoyed the situation, and the difference in the appearance of his two friends.

He broke the silence presently, however, to say "Boone, this is my friend and secretary, Rafe Slaughter; a man who knows more about me than I do about myself, and whom I trust implicitly with everything that concerns me. I want you to know each other and to be good friends."

At these words Rafe lifted up his right hand, as though it were something he was taking from the floor, and extended it in the direction of Daniel Boone, who seizing it rather gingerly in his own let it drop smartly,

seemingly apprehensive lest it should burn or otherwise injure him.

Up to this moment Rafe had not spoken; but he now found his voice, which, to the astonishment of the hunter, proved to be very deep-toned, and quite out of proportion with the size and general appearance which its owner presented.

"I have heard of Daniel Boone," he said, slowly; "you come from up Yadkin way, I think?"

The hunter nodded.

"I have heard of you," he continued, "as the man who has been further West than almost anybody else in the Colonies. I am glad to see you."

"Any friend of Judge Anderson's is bound to get my respect, so far," said Boone cautiously.

Judge Anderson laughed.

"You may take him on my valuation, Boone; by and by, when you know him better, you will like him on your own; now sit down, both of you."

The hunter resumed his seat, and the Judge's secretary established himself near the door.

Being seated, the latter turned to the Judge, saying: "It seems you had some kind of trouble at Hills borough."

"We did," replied the Judge; "and if it had not been for my friend Boone, it might have been worse—just as if it had not been for him, it might have been better,"—and here the Judge cast a laughing glance at the hunter, who merely uttered a grunt to signify that the subject had already been exhausted.

Judge Anderson, however, who was something of a humorist, in his way, was inclined to get the most he could out of what appeared to him to be a capital joke.

"You see, Rafe," said he, "this excitable friend of mine had to make an attack upon McCandless, on account of some boy the Scotchman was putting out of his shop. The boy was Boone's son, but I do not know as that need make any difference with my story."

The hunter smiled grimly at this way of putting it, which even he, though not very appreciative of jests, could not fail to enjoy.

"McCandless was treating the boy rather roughly, when Boone interfered, and the crowd, who had only been waiting for a good chance, saw their opportunity and pummelled the Scotchman unmercifully; then a general fight followed, and it turned out that our friends the Regulators were using these means to settle their own private difficulties with McCandless. and one or two others.

"It really began to look quite exciting when they ran the Sheriff under a tree with a rope round his neck, and made preparations to hang him."

"They *did* hang him, Judge," remarked Boone at this juncture.

"Quite right," said the Judge laughing, "they hung him—several feet in the air, and you will hardly believe that he would have been hanging there yet, if it had not been for a bullet from the rifle of Boone here: it actually cut the rope in two; the man dropped, and

before the crowd could recover from their consternation he succeeded in reaching us.

"His friends, I suppose (I would say, however, I hardly think he had a friend in the party), could not very well avoid helping the Sheriff out of his trouble, so we all surrounded him and brought him off in safety."

"You ran away from the field, Judge," said Rafe, and a sarcastic smile showed itself at the corners of his mouth.

"Well," replied the Judge, and his brow lowered a little, while the color rose in his face; "you may call it that if you have a mind, and I am not particularly proud of my own part in the matter; yet, you must know, that it would not have done for a Superior Court Judge to have joined voluntarily in a riot."

"Why did you not suppress it?" said the other.

"That is very easily said—with what instruments? there were about fifteen of us, and three hundred of the Regulators. Besides, the towns-people came in to protect their own property, and as they were willing to do the fighting, I was willing they should.

"Moreover, it gave me an opportunity to refuse holding court, which was precisely what I most desired."

"Why so?"

"Why, that fellow Roberts was worrying me about his case against McCandless, which I had received orders not to entertain. I may tell you, confidentially, that I think the case a good one, and differed with the Governor as to its being brought to judg-

ment; but as it stood, I had nothing to do but to obey orders.

"Under the circumstances, the best course for me was not to hold court, since I would thus gain time, during which the matter may come under reconsideration, and be adjudicated differently."

"Looking at it from that point of view," said Rafe, "I do not know but what you are right; of course you have heard nothing from Hillsborough since?"

"Not a word," replied the Judge. "There has not been time. We rode hard, and only reached here this afternoon. Now I have answered your questions, will you be good enough to answer mine?"

"I found everything satisfactory at the mill," said Rafe, as though no time had elapsed, or other subject been treated, since the question was asked on his first entrance. "All the lumber is being got out that you ordered."

"Have you brought the accounts?"

"I have; here they are," and he extracted a package of papers from a pocket in his coat, and handed it to the Judge, who laid it on the table opposite to him.

"Now," said the latter, "as it is growing late and I am a little tired, I think I will go to bed. In the morning"—he continued, addressing Boone—"I shall want to see you to talk over the plan I mentioned to you before Rafe came in."

Going to the door the Judge looked out into the great hall, where, as it was still chilly, a large wood-fire was burning in the capacious open fire-place which filled

nearly half of one end. On a table stood several candles in brass candlesticks ; and, being followed into the hall by his two companions, the Judge gave each of them one, and they retired to their rooms.

In one bed in the apartment to be occupied by the hunter, lay the young lad who had been the innocent occasion of the Hillsborough riot—a conflict which was to pass into history as one of the first occasioned by the growing dissatisfaction experienced by the Colonists, in regard to the conduct of the officials who represented among them a harsh and unjust Government.

CHAPTER III.

In which Judge Anderson elucidates his designs, without affording any material information either to Boone or to the reader ; while Rafe Slaughter demonstrates himself after his kind, and the hunter at length sets his face homeward.

ON the morning following the events recorded in our last chapter, Boone was stirring early, as was his habit ; so early, in fact, that none of the members of the household were visible as he emerged on the long piazza that extended across the front of Judge Anderson's residence.

The day was bright and cheerful, though there was a slight chill in the air, and the birds were singing their spring songs amid the fresh leaves that were putting forth in all directions from the shrubbery, and from the larger trees that shaded the lawn.

The first one of Judge Anderson's family to appear was his daughter, a lissome, active, and, withal, exceedingly pretty girl of some sixteen years, who had seen the hunter at tea the night before, and who now addressed him with the freedom which characterized the times and people, and was specially common between Boone and all children. These always seemed to recognize at a glance that the stalwart nature of the pioneer signified a man to be implicitly trusted, and they made friends with him without ceremony.

Indeed, Boone always unbent from his customary serious and preoccupied mien, when in the society of these young people. On this occasion, after the usual morning salutation, he freely questioned the girl as to her amusements and the society which she found in the neighborhood.

The section where Judge Anderson resided was thickly populated, though his immediate residence and farm were somewhat isolated, and, indeed, occupied a considerable tract of land—many hundred acres, in fact—the most of which was under cultivation.

There were, however, a number of well-to-do families in the neighborhood, and among these Jessie Anderson was a favorite. She had, therefore, much to tell, in her winsome and girlish fashion, of the pastimes that were common to her class in society. These were not widely different from such as occupy young people similarly situated in our own times. There were parties and junketings—picnics, we would call them—and excursions into the woods, which in this part of the country were free from both Indians and wild beasts—the two dangers which were certain to be encountered by forest wanderers not many miles farther west.

The young men of the neighborhood, she said, were mostly farmers' sons, though some of them were clerks in the offices of the Government officials in the neighboring town.

The hunter quite enjoyed her pleasant conversation, much of which he elicited by questions which would hardly have been expected from one more accustomed

to the solitude of a wild and uncultivated country, than to the habits of refined society.

While they were thus engaged Judge Anderson himself appeared, followed closely by the anomalous figure of his secretary. The Judge shook hands warmly with Boone, and hoped he had passed a pleasant and restful night. Rafe Slaughter extended his hand, at the extremity of his long right arm, again with the apparent motion of picking up something from the ground, and offering it as a propitiatory gift, and Boone took it with much the manner of receiving some unexpected and not altogether desirable article which was being thrust upon him.

The hunter could not, indeed, quite recover himself from the startling impression made upon him by this peculiar-looking being. He seemed, as he regarded the Judge's secretary, to be turning over in his mind some dim comparison, as though with creatures that he had seen pictured in books, or possibly in life, during the course of his peregrinations.

"Judge," said Boone, after he had performed the manipulation with the secretary to which we have referred, "I was thinking I would be moving homeward as early to-day as you can spare me, because, you see, I ain't anxious to meet any of those Regulator fellers, and by the time that Hillsborough matter gets noised round they're pretty sartin to collect themselves together. My road to Yadkin lies right through the thickest of 'em, and if I'm going to travel out o' the neighborhood, thar ain't any use of my havin' anything

to say to 'em ; an' besides that, Judge, I was turning over in my mind in the night what you was telling me, and it ain't any more agreeable for me to meet the King's officers just now ; so, altogether, unless you can raise objections, I think the sooner I start the better."

"You may be right, Boone, about the Regulators," said the Judge, thoughtfully. "If you stay in these parts they won't be satisfied unless you either join them or set yourself against them, and, as I understand 't, you don't care to do either.

"As for the King's officers, I don't think you need anticipate any trouble from them, even if you should meet any, which is not likely. Whatever action is to be taken with regard to the riot will be my work, at least in the beginning, and it will take some time to arrange about that. However, what I have to say to you will not occupy a great while, and we will get at it immediately after breakfast, which I see by Jessie's face is now waiting for us."

The young girl had, in fact, retired into the house on the appearance of her father, and now showed herself at the door, where her appearance answered the purpose of announcing the morning meal, whose period was now further indicated by the ringing of a large bell in the hands of a black girl. The others followed her in, and presently were seated around a well-filled table in the large dining-room, where Mrs. Anderson, another daughter, and a lad a few years younger than his sisters, comprising the family, were already gathered in

waiting. The meal passed quickly in pleasant conversation, in which the secretary took a distinguished part.

This strange being was, in fact, as peculiar in his mental as in his physical constitution. With a face of such a lugubrious cast that a smile would have seemed quite out of place on it, he possessed a wit as spirited and original as its expressions were unexpected to those unacquainted with him.

The son of an English clergyman, according to his own story, Rafe Slaughter had received a university education, being himself, he said, originally designed for the ministry. The embarrassment which grew upon him with his years, as he contemplated his ungainly form and harsh and peculiar features, had eventually turned him from his tendency in that direction.

The parental determination had not been sufficient to overcome his strong feelings of dislike to undertake the profession of religion; and this being persisted in, as he stated, had brought about such a combat of wills that the young man had emigrated to the Colonies, with, in lieu of patrimony, merely his education, and a very firm determination to succeed in the pursuit of some object in life, the nature of which, however, he had not yet fully determined.

This had occurred some twenty years before the period we are considering, for Rafe was much older than his present employer. He had drifted about from one city to another, employing himself in teaching, or in such other ways as presented themselves, making a scanty living, rendered more difficult to obtain by his

personal characteristics. He had, finally, about five years before, floated into Granville County, and attracted the notice of Judge Anderson, who was not slow to recognize ability, however it might be masked.

From doing odd jobs of writing and research among law books for precedents, Rafe had grown into his present position—that of secretary, factotum, and confidential agent, in which lines he had made himself absolutely essential to his employer.

For three years past he had lived in the family of the Judge, treated as an equal, and rather like a trusted friend and adviser than as a subordinate—though Judge Anderson did not altogether credit his secretary's statement as to all the details of his past life.

Rafe's character was as strange a mixture as his organization. To great firmness and determination in most directions, there were allied in him weaknesses which would long before have conquered a less resolute man.

Really born of an old Irish family in high repute, he had inherited qualities of rare virtue. A high sense of honor, precise personal integrity, and indomitable courage, both physical and moral, were characteristics of a nature which would thus seem to be fully and excellently equipped for the world's battle. With these qualities were unfortunately combined others, now happily overcome, which, like the evil gift of the revengeful fairy in the legend, had for many years gone far to frustrate and distract a life which would otherwise have been singularly symmetrical.

With the noble characteristics which doubtless descended from his ancestors, Rafe Slaughter had inherited from some one of them, a passion, which a century before had been even more prominent than at the time of which we are writing—the love of strong drink.

Yet it is not to be supposed that in the latter part of the eighteenth century, either in England or among the people of the Colonies, who gained their habits as well as their manners and customs from the mother-country, there was any marked tendency toward temperance. Quite on the contrary, our forefathers of this period, and their relatives on the other side of the ocean, were both, as a rule, greatly addicted to imbibing.

In the southern provinces of America, more particularly—since these had derived their population to a considerable extent from the old English cavalier families—heavy drinking was the rule, both among the upper and lower classes.

Rafe had formed the habit in his younger days, and it had long clung to him with tenacity. He had always been, however, sufficiently master of himself to control any marked exhibition of its evil effects, and long before the period when he is introduced to the reader, he had totally and permanently overcome its influence upon him.

This digression is necessary at this point to afford a fair understanding of the original nature of a man, who, as will be hereafter seen, was destined to occupy a prominent position in connection with the events which are to be herein recorded.

After breakfast was over, and all had risen from the table, the Judge led the way to the library, whither Boone and the secretary accompanied him ; but before he left the dining-room, the hunter was careful to see his son handed over to the good graces and kindly care of Jessie Anderson, who, with her brother and sister, was gladly willing to do what she could toward amusing the boy, who appeared to these children as quite a hero, from his connection with the events at Hillsborough.

Being seated about the library-table, and the door closed, Judge Anderson filled his pipe, a luxury which he freely permitted himself, but which Boone refused and opened the conversation.

“Boone,” he said, “how far west have you been in your travels?”

The hunter thought a moment, and then said: “Well, I’ve traveled a good deal up Watauga way, and along the forks of the Holston, and once got as far as Cumberland Gap.”

“When did you make your first trip?”

“Well, let me see ; it is about eight years—yes, in ’60.”

“When were you last out there?”

“You see, Judge,” and the hunter hitched uneasily on his chair, “I’ve been moving about in that direction every year since my first visit, but sometimes I get farther west, and sometimes farther south. Now, last year, say about a year ago now, I was huntin’ ’round north of where I live on the Yadkin, about a week’s journey.”

"Is that as far north as you have penetrated?"

"Well, yes, I should think it was. But, Judge, you know I am no scholar, and don't keep record of where I go any more than blazing the trees and remembering how long it takes me, and that ain't very close reckoning, because sometimes I camp out for a week at a time when the venison or b'ars are thick, an' then agin, I push straight on for days together."

"That's near enough for my purpose," said the Judge, and then he sat in silence for some moments.

The secretary, who seemingly had no idea that the questions and answers respectively, of the Judge and his pioneer friend, need have any interest for him, had risen from his seat and gone for amusement to the book-case. Here he stood, looking along the shelves above his head, apparently seeking some special volume, which he presently discerned with the quick and experienced glance of a bibliomaniac, and having possessed himself of it, seated himself and proceeded to read, apparently oblivious of all about him.

The Judge, quite accustomed to Rafe's manner, paid no attention to him, but presently moving his chair close to Boone's, said

"How long will it take you to get ready and arrange your affairs to go out over the ground you have already trod and beyond it—to move right into the wilderness I mean, perhaps 250 or 300 miles?"

The hunter pondered a moment, and then replied:

"It won't take me long, Judge, to make my preparations for going; but you see, there'll be matters to be

looked after in the way of taking care of my old woman and the little folks"—

"If you go, their care shall be my charge," interrupted the Judge. "You need not let their condition occupy your mind."

Boone gave him a quick sharp look, while he heaved a sigh, as though he had unburdened himself of something unwelcome he had been carrying.

"Well, Judge, that being settled, though I don't know your meaning, I think I could get ready and leave in three weeks or a month at furthest, after I am back to Yadkin."

"Can you find," said the Judge, "companions who will be willing to go with you?"

The hunter paused a moment.

"Yes," he said presently. "There are a few men up my way who won't object to go, I should think. One or two of them have been out pretty far, already. There's John Finley, for instance, and Stuart and Cool—yes, I can find five or six good men who will go—if it is made to their advantage.

"You see, Judge, they ain't like me, altogether, to go out there for the fun of the thing, or with my ideas of what is coming after, and what it is all for. They want to have something in hand that they can take hold of—do you understand?"

"That's all right, Boone. My plan, of course, includes paying liberally for the hardships and toil which must necessarily be endured by those who undertake to assist me in forwarding it.

"You and your companions will be equally entitled to receive a fair remuneration for your services, when the time comes for the undertaking I have in hand. Meanwhile, I must specially request that you keep the matter an entire secret between us. My secretary is, of course, not included in this injunction, as he will be made aware of every step in the future, as he has in the past, in the direction toward which I am tending.

"At the present instant, it is only necessary for us to mutually understand that you are ready, or will be, whenever called upon, to make such an excursion as I have indicated ; and to supply yourself with such men as those to whom you have alluded, and who will be ready to join you. And there is no reason why you should not sound these men as to their readiness to go, so as to have them prepared when the time comes.

"I have spoken of a speedy movement, but that was more to find out how long it would take you to get ready, and generally to inform myself as to your condition, in regard to your ties of family and business, than because I necessarily want you to go at once.

"Delays will very likely occur to postpone the carrying out of my intentions for some time, but, meanwhile I shall make it my business to look after your interests, and anything that I can do to forward them will be done most cheerfully."

The Judge now rose, as though to signify that the interview was concluded, and Boone very willingly followed his example. In fact, the hunter was quite as

anxious, as he had signified, to proceed on his journey homeward.

Rafe Slaughter was still deeply immersed in the volume he had chosen. Perceiving a movement, he now relinquished his employment, and, rising from his seat, approached the table.

"Well, Rafe," said the Judge, pleasantly, "I hope we have not disturbed your studies by our conversation."

Not in the least, sir," replied the other; "I was interested in my reading."

The Judge now ordered up Boone's horse; the boy Jimmy was called from his play, and presently the members of the family assembled on the piazza, and bade adieu to their guest.

Curiously enough, Boone always appeared at his best on such an occasion. There was a certain simple and untutored dignity about the man, gained, doubtless, through his association with nature and in the watchfulness of his customary life, which gave him a most manly, and, one might say, elevated deportment, in the presence of ladies and gentlemen.

After a hearty and genial farewell, he mounted his horse, with the lad before him on the saddle, and, in another moment, the pair had started on their long journey homeward.

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No sooner was the clattering of the hoofs of Boone's horse silent in the distance, than the Judge, giving his secretary a sign, returned hastily to the library.

"Rafe," he said, as he stepped to his table and sat himself before it, "you heard our conversation?"

"I did, sir, every word of it."

"What do you think of the man?"

"He is honest, fearless, and worthy of confidence, or I am very much in error."

"You would trust him with this affair, would you not?" continued the Judge.

Rafe hesitated for a moment before he replied.

"I would not trust him nor any man," he said at length, "any further than the necessities of the case required. Freedom of confidence beyond that point always appears to me foolishness."

"According to that, Mr. Rafe Slaughter, I must seem to you a very silly man," said the Judge, with a shrewd twinkle in his eyes.

The secretary came as near smiling at this sudden turn of the affair by his employer, as it was possible for him to do with the material at hand. He was, however, quite equal to the occasion; indeed, these passages of wit were not infrequent between them, and the Judge generally found that his secretary could quite hold his own in the course of them.

"I don't admit the application, Judge. I won't offer so lame an explanation as that the cases are totally different, but I will remark that, in the nature of our intimate association—for which I never can cease to be grateful to you—there is very little in the way of secrets that you communicate to me, that I should not be apt to find out myself."

The Judge laughed aloud at this. "Well, Rafe, you are a cool one, I will say."

The secretary only bowed, and the Judge continued. "I want you to go at once to John Williams and Leonard Bullock, and ask them to meet me here this afternoon for conference. Write, also, to William Johnston, Thomas Hogg, Thomas Hart, John Lutterell, Nathaniel Hart, and David Hart, and beg them to make what speed they can to meet us all at my house at an early day."

"Shall I explain any occasion for the meeting, either in the notes or in my personal interviews?"

"No, you need not, they'll sufficiently understand."

The secretary left the room to visit the two gentlemen named, who resided in Granville, and to write to the others, and the Judge departed to examine into the conduct of the farm and consult with his overseers.

In the afternoon Rafe returned with Williams and Bullock, and a conference was held, the secretary being present, the nature of which it is unnecessary to disclose at the present juncture. Notes had been written during the interval to the other parties whom the Judge had named, and these were sent by special messenger to Orange County, where they all resided. Some days elapsed before these missives were heard from, and it was late in the following week when they all appeared in answer to the invitations which they had severally received.

The meeting took place, and was a lengthy one, there being present, besides the new-comers, the two who had

already conferred with the Judge—Williams and Burlock—and the secretary, making ten in all.

On concluding their conference, apparently with a satisfactory agreement among themselves, judging from their manner, the gentlemen departed to their several homes, and Judge Anderson was left alone with his family again. For several hours after the departure of his guests, he was closeted with his secretary, who was busily engaged in writing from his dictation, the sitting lasting into the night.

On the following morning Rafe Slaughter started on horseback, at an early hour, apparently for a long journey. His saddle-bags were well filled, a rifle was strapped across his shoulders, and a pair of horse-pistols could be seen projecting from his holsters. Thus armed and equipped, his short legs high in the stirrups, and his long arms dangling and brandishing in the air with the movement of his steed, the secretary rode hurriedly in a westerly direction.

CHAPTER IV.

How Daniel Boone falls in with one of the Regulators, and what happens.

Disclosing, moreover, the fact that there is nothing so easy as to overvalue the weight of words.

IT was nearing sunset on the second day from that of the hunter's departure from Granville, when Boone and his young son, still riding as before, were slowly climbing a heavily-wooded hill, where the bridle-path was narrow and closely overhung by the branches of the forest trees that skirted its sides.

The hunter had kept a south-westerly direction for the first day, but had then changed his course, following roads with which he was apparently familiar, and which led more northward through Orange County, thus enabling him to leave, at some fifteen or twenty miles distance to the south, the town of Hillsborough, a place which he did not seem in the least inclined to revisit.

The horse was tired and the boy sleepy, and as the evening gloom came down, Boone hastened his steed, hoping to reach some farm-house, where he could lodge for the night.

Although the hunter knew that the section through which he was traveling was in the very thickest of the

district infested by the Regulators, he depended on the fact that he was but little acquainted with the inhabitants, for carrying him through without question.

It had become so dark that it was difficult to see the road or path before them, when a light appeared on the right, and close at hand.

A few moments brought the horse in front of a farmhouse built of logs, as was usual in this part of North Carolina, and presently the tramping of the horse's feet having disturbed the inmates, a man's voice was heard loudly hallooing, "Who's there?"

Boone reined up at once, and answered, "A friend. In those days, and in those parts, it was not well to move on without responding to a salutation. One was not unlikely to hear a rifle bullet whistle over his head as a warning not to come nearer, unless his intentions were friendly.

The man who had called out soon appeared at the door of his cabin, having returned for a lantern, which he now held above his head, the light exhibiting a face unfamiliar to the hunter.

"Can you give my boy and me lodging for the night and a bite to eat, and my horse a bit of provender?"

The man with the lantern stepped down, and approached near enough to see from whom the request emanated. Scanning the rider carefully, he appeared satisfied with what he saw.

"Alight, stranger, you shall have the best I have got, and your horse shall not go unfed. It is little we have in these days at the best," he continued, as Boone

dropped his son lightly to the ground, and in a moment stood beside him, holding his horse by the bridle.

"Between the poor crops last-year, and the thieving that went on all winter, there's not much left to us."

As he said these words, the speaker threw the light of his lantern full in Boone's face, which he seemed to be studying carefully.

"I have heard before, it was bad times in these parts," replied the latter, "and it is not my meaning to ask anything of you that I can't pay for, tho' I am not much given to having money with me."

The other replied shortly: "Oh! I do not mind a meal and a night's lodging to a decent traveler—I was not thinking of that—let me have your horse, and you and the boy step inside. My old woman is in there, and she will give you a decent welcome, I dare say."

Taking the bridle from Boone's hand, he proceeded toward the rear of the cabin, while the hunter and his son stepped over the rude log that formed the door-sill, and entered the cabin, where both were pleasantly greeted by a bright, active-looking woman of middle age, who was engaged in getting supper. In this process she was assisted by a girl some twelve or thirteen years old, while two or three younger children played about on the floor of the cabin.

The dwelling was one of the customary sort occupied by new settlers, this part of Orange County being quite distant from any town or settlement.

There were three rooms, the cabin being divided in the middle by a rough partition of boards, hewn from

pine logs. The room in which the hunter found himself was therefore exactly half the cabin. At one end a big wood fire blazed up the chimney, which was built on the outside of the cabin, as was customary. This room was apparently the kitchen, eating and general sitting-room of the family, and a rude table, and a few stools, with a rack for the simple service necessary to their meals, constituted the furniture of the place.

The back room, divided in two, supplied the bedrooms of the family. The out-houses were as rude and plain, as would naturally be the case with the dwelling described.

Boone sat down, on being invited by his hostess, and the boy Jimmy speedily made friends with the children of the household.

A few questions and answers passed back and forth, but Boone was always taciturn, except when among his intimate associates, and the farmer's wife was not much more inclined for conversation, besides being engaged in preparation for supper.

In a few moments the farmer entered and announced that the horse was feeding, and properly sheltered. Seating himself, Boone's new host gave an opportunity for the examination of his appearance, of which the hunter, though not usually inspired by curiosity, had no hesitation in taking advantage.

The examination was not altogether unsatisfactory, although the look of the man was not calculated to inspire immediate confidence.

He was short, bronzed with open-air employment,

his hands toughened by toil—with short curling hair, turned prematurely gray by exposure to the elements : and round-shouldered by stooping, an action customary to the farmer and the sailor—his face appeared a mixture of openness and concealment, in which one of these characteristics seemed always striving with the other for supremacy.

One was at one moment favorably impressed, at the next repelled ; and no sooner had the hunter made up his mind that his host was a simple, social, hospitable fellow, and be inclined to converse freely with him, than a change of expression would alter his opinion, and he would shield himself beneath his customary reticence.

“By the way,” he said, after listening for a few minutes to talk about the crops, and as they were sitting down to table, “what might your name be, friend ?”

The other looked at him sharply, and replied at once : “Howell is my name, and I might as well ask the same question.”

“Oh, sartin !” said the hunter. “My name is Boone, Daniel Boone of Yadkin.”

Howell had begun to cut the pork, which was before him, and which served as the staple article for supper, but, as he heard the name of his guest, he stopped short, and for a moment seemed as though he would drop his knife.

The sharp eyes of the pioneer did not fail to notice the action, but he said nothing, only regarding him steadily ; the other speedily recovered himself, and repeated after him : “Daniel Boone !” He was on the

point of making an observation—thought better of it—swallowed it, and turned himself to cutting the pork, his mind apparently concentrated on seeing that his visitor should be well served.

As we have already remarked, Boone did not fail to observe the manner of his host, and kept a watchful eye upon him from that moment forward.

This course presently caused the interception of a quick glance which passed between Howell and his wife, and which neither supposed to have been seen by the pioneer.

Having served his guests and the family and recovered himself from whatever had affected him on hearing Boone's name, Howell became talkative again, seeking to engage the other in conversation on the state of the times, and apparently desiring to draw from him some expression of opinion on this particular subject.

Boone, however, was wary, employing in his behalf, perhaps, the cunning which he had learned in wood craft and association with the Indians.

He was, in fact, desirous to keep out of the questions which occupied the public mind of this part of North Carolina, and did not mean, unless driven to the wall, to commit himself to any course, either of judgment or action.

Rednap Howell, however, his new acquaintance, was a shrewd fellow, and, as it happened, vitally interested in the movements of the Regulators. He had heard of Boone, whose name was indeed pretty generally known

with that of Finlay, Harrod, Burke, and others of the more adventurous and advanced pioneers; though Boone himself was one of the younger and at that time less experienced of these men.

It will be readily understood by the reader, that for such a movement as was contemplated and in hand on the part of the Regulators, it was eminently desirable that such active and fearless men as Boone should be gained as adherents.

News of the Hillsborough riot had, of course, reached Howell, who was one of the leaders in the general movement, although he happened not to be present on that occasion. He perfectly well knew of Boone's connection with the affair, but neither he nor the other leaders had yet concluded as to the position the pioneer would eventually take.

This being the case his efforts to draw Boone into a statement or admission which could be used to implicate him, will be at once admitted to be a suitable course of conduct on the part of Howell.

Boone's general reputation was based purely upon his roaming life; and while he was known to be fearless and energetic in the pursuit of game, and courageous where Indians were in question, he was generally considered to be unacquainted with and unversed in the ways of the white man and the tricks and turns customary to society.

The conspirators already believed, and Howell especially, that either by threats or cajolement the pioneer could be induced to cast his lot with them.

Howell, therefore, thanked fortune inwardly for the chance that had thrust so important an instrument in his way, and determined that no effort should be lost on his part to inveigle Boone into implication with the designs of himself and his coadjutors.

But, as will perhaps have been perceived already, Boone's general reputation, excepting so far as concerned his special vocation in life, was a very misleading one.

The pioneer, though rough and untutored in the ordinary ways of men, and, moreover, uneducated to any such extent as would fit him for social or official position, was, nevertheless, a man of strong mind and clear natural insight, which qualities easily prepared him to meet any question which might come in his way. Suspicious also, if not by nature, by the constant habits of his life, his first impressions of men would not be in their favor. It would, indeed, take much longer for a man to ingratiate himself with such a character as Daniel Boone than with one more familiar with men, and more accustomed to their methods.

In the present instance Boone's natural suspicion was peculiarly on the alert from the danger that he felt surrounded him, so long as he was in the immediate neighborhood of the Hillsborough difficulty.

He had not scanned Howell's face for nothing, nor had he watched his manner and mode of conducting himself without forming a pretty shrewd judgment as to the nature of the man. He was, therefore, quite well prepared to answer any questions that might be put to him, and at the same time determined not to

commit himself against the interests which he believed were those of his friend Judge Anderson.

Supper being over, and Howell's wife engaged in clearing off the table and attending to her domestic duties, the two men drew stools to the fire and sat down. Howell filled his pipe and offered the same luxury to his guest, which was, however, refused.

"You don't smoke?" said Howell.

"No, I never l'arned, and it ain't much use of my doin' it now. In the woods, the smoke of a pipe as well as the light may often carry information you don't want sent to people you don't want to get it."

"It's a great comforter," said the other.

"Very likely," responded Boone, "and I am glad to see others enjoy it, and I've nothin' to say agin it as to them."

"Tobacco is awfully dear, these times," continued Howell as he puffed the smoke luxuriously in the air.

"Then I wouldn't smoke," said Boone, sententiously.

The other stared at him before making any comment on this observation. Presently he continued:

"Tobacco is awfully dear, but it ain't any worse than anything else. What the frosts and floods spares, the tax-gatherer eats up, and between the two we're pretty nigh starved."

"You look well fed, my friend," remarked Boone.

Howell grunted in dissent to this.

"Well, when I say starved, I don't mean to be taken that way exactly. Of course I get enough to eat.

The trouble is it costs mor'n it ought ter, and we're kept forever in debt, and can't lay up nothin'. Don't you find it so up your way?"

"Well, no, not exactly," replied Boone. "We have our ups and downs. As for me, I don't take much interest in the farming, except now and then, but my wife is pretty forehanded, and a good manager, and my father's thare, an' my brothers, an' the boys are growin' up, an' bein' of some use, and I believe we manage to get up as good crops as our neighbors, and they don't complain."

"Well, it's different down in your section. You see, you're so far from the seat of government that it costs more for the tax-collectors and sheriffs and them to go out and rob you than it would come to, and so I expect that's the reason why you get on better'n we do.

"But I tell you what it is, Boone, it's the truth I'm tellin' you, that we're awfully pressed down here and don't get our rights nohow, and there are a good many of my way of thinkin', and that little matter over at Hillsborough,"—and here Howell took his pipe out of his mouth and pointed it at Boone, while he looked him earnestly in the face,—“that little matter over at Hillsborough is only a beginning. I know you was into it, and I know the part you took into it, and I ain't afraid to speak to you about it. You've got the repute of being a straightforward kind of man, and I don't believe that whatever your opinions might be, that you're the kind to turn informer, or put any of us into trouble."

Here he knocked the ashes out of his pipe on the hearth, and settled himself to see what would come from these remarks.

Boone had never moved a muscle of his face, while staring at the other, evidently fully understanding the nature of all he was saying. He did not reply for a moment, and when he did, it was in his usual calm and deliberate fashion.

"If you know about what happened at Hillsborough, there's no use o' my tellin' you; an' if you know it right, you must know that I was not to blame for the part I had in it, which was only to protect that boy of mine from harm at the hands of a strong man, who ought to have treated him more tenderly."

"Oh, you're right there," said the other, "and that old scoundrel of a Scotchman didn't get more'n he deserved. If I'd been there, and I think I'm sorry I wasn't, I'd have been tempted to settle him on the spot, or my name isn't Rednap Howell. But what I can't onderstand, Boone, about you is, why you cut down that cussed Sheriff that everybody hates, who never did a good turn in his life for any one, and who ought to have been hung up years ago."

Boone's eyes twinkled, and he answered this challenge on the instant.

"You see, Mr. Howell, what was going on among your people down there was none of my business, but this you speak of was right in my line."

"How do you mean?" said the other.

"Why, shootin'. I'm used to taking a good shot when

I find it, whether it's peeling the scalp off a squirrel at the top of a pine tree, or puttin' a ball through an Injun, if I ketch him my side of *any* tree. When I saw that rope with a man dangling onto the end of it, I couldn't resist the temptation, as you say, of cutting it; and if I do say it, it was as pretty a shot as I ever made in my life."

Howell looked at him sharply, to see if he really meant what he said, but it would have taken a very much keener eye than his to have detected the thoughts of the pioneer. He finally concluded to accept the explanation given, but at the same time was shrewd enough to turn it to his own advantage.

"I can onderstand that feeling, Boone. I ain't muck of a shot myself, though I can knock over a buck at a hundred paces with my old brown Bess; and have seen the time when I've done that squirrel-trick you tell of, and I don't know but your temptation ought to explain your conduct. But if that's so, and you ain't got any feelin's in favor of the Sheriff and his kind, why, it follows you ain't got any objections to jining us; and when I say us, you see I put myself in your power, because you know just what that means without my tellin' you."

Boone saw the trap, and had indeed seen it when he made the remark which developed it.

He knew enough of the character of the men represented by the one with whom he was conversing, to see that it would not answer for him to be put in the wrong at this juncture.

"I've got no call," he said, presently, "to interfere in your local fights. I don't live here, and my interests, such as they are, are a long ways from here. I am on my way home, and there's no telling where I may be this time thirty days; but while I don't mean to mix in other people's quarrels, I am free to say that I'm not goin' to turn informer, as you put it, even if I knew anything about the matter, which I don't."

"That's no more'n I'd expect from a man of your kind. But you say that you've no interests in these parts, and you live a long ways from here, and you don't want to mix with local quarrels.

"Now, I ain't gainsaying that. You know your own matters better'n I do, but I can tell you, Daniel Boone, this here thing ain't goin' to stop till the whole country is roused up to it. Already, not this county alone, nor Granville, but half the Colony is into it, an' that's gettin' pretty near Yadkin, where you are.

"Before this time thirty days they'll be talking of this thing up your way, and when the fight comes your people ain't going to let us be put down, or I don't know the kind of men you're a specimen of.

"Now, I'm thinkin' 'twill be better for you to be in at the first, and take hands with us while there's some danger in it, than to wait till we've fought the fight an' won the victory, and be left out then to be pointed at. You ain't the kind of man to like that."

Boone flushed slightly at these words. He was a man equally courageous in thought and in action. The picture of himself in a cowardly attitude was not

palatable. Still he remembered Judge Anderson, and measured his words.

"Before thirty days are over," he said, "I may be hundreds of miles from here, where your doings won't reach me, and I mayn't return for a twelvemonth, or two of 'em. You see I've made one journey of two years, and I may make another. What 'd be the use to you or to me of my mixing myself with something I couldn't carry out?"

"You're really going away, then, are you?" said Howell.

"That's what I'm expectin'."

"An' you'll be gone a year or two?"

"I may."

"You and Judge Anderson are pretty thick together," continued Howell, slyly.

"We were born in the same year, and he and my father were friends before we came to Carolina."

"Well, you're pretty good friends anyway."

"I like the Judge, and I guess the Judge don't dislike me. We don't see each other often."

"It was kind of curious your being down at Hillsborough just then, wasn't it?"

"Well, no. You see my old woman has got some relations in Orange, and I come down to see them, and Hillsborough bein' near by, I thought I'd take it in my way."

"And then you thought you'd go off with Judge Anderson to Granville, which was not in your way?"

"Well, you see, the Judge and I, bein' old friends,

an' he bein' there, when he asked me to come and pay him a visit, I couldn't well refuse, as I'd plenty of time Particularly," he added, "after he had helped me out of my trouble with the Scotchman."

This was not exactly the fact, but it was a quick thought of Boone's, and it did him good service. Up to this point Howell had had the best of the argument, but this idea threw a new color on Boone's position, and the Regulator was not unwilling to accept it.

He had learned all he could expect to know of Boone's designs, and the conversation left him, fortunately for the other, of the opinion with which he started—that Boone had no predilections for or against the Regulators; that he certainly would not do anything to injure them; and that if the time ever came when he would be forced to take sides one way or the other, it was at least an even chance that he would go with them.

It was now growing late, and when Boone suggested that he was fatigued and would like to retire, the other made no objections, but showed him to one of the rooms behind the one in which they were sitting, and where little Jimmy was already in bed and asleep. It did not take the hunter long to follow his example; and though he could hear the voices of Howell and his wife in earnest conversation on the other side of the partition, he could not hear their words, and deep sleep soon overpowered him.

On the following morning Boone was up at day-break, but found that Howell and his wife had pre-

ceded him, and that preparations were already far advanced for breakfast. Having partaken of this meal, which consisted of bacon and corn dodgers, washed down with cool spring water, the hunter mounted his horse, and, having first insisted on his host receiving a fair sum in compensation for his hospitality, he bade the family a hearty farewell, and resumed his journey.

No sooner were the hunter and his son fairly out of sight and hearing, than Howell, who had stood with his wife and children watching them ride away, said hurriedly :

“ Mary, I’m goin’ to see Roberts.”

“ What do you want to see him for ? ”

“ Well, I ain’t altogether satisfied with the way that man talked last night. He spoke glib enough, but now that the words are cold they don’t exactly seem to suit me as well as they did then. Anyhow, I’m goin’. I’ll tell Roberts and the rest, and they can take the responsibility, and I’ll just saddle my horse, and go while the fever’s on.”

This was no sooner said than done, and in fifteen minutes, Howell, mounted on a rough-looking, but fast horse, was galloping in the opposite direction to that taken by the hunter, and on his way to Hillsborough, in which town resided Roberts, engaged in conducting the general practice of law, besides being the chief personage among the Regulators.

CHAPTER V.

In which the Reader is introduced to the hero and heroine of this story—as well as to some other important personages.

IN what is now the county of Guilford, North Carolina, and at a point about sixty miles west from the residence of Judge Anderson in Granville, there stood, at the time of which we are writing, on an eminence overlooking a considerable valley spread out at its feet, a fine mansion of more massive structure and broader proportions than was usual in those days.

The tendency of immigration into North Carolina had been rather to the west than nearer the seaboard up to this time, and there a more considerable population had settled than would otherwise have been the case, owing to the fact that grants of land made originally by the proprietors of the Carolinas, and afterward conceded by the Crown on the purchase of the country from them, had been offered and made on much more liberal terms and at far lower rates than was the case with the lands farther east.

The Carolinas had been settled very largely by the Irish and Scotch, drawn thither by the opportunity offered of obtaining land at such remarkably low prices.

Among the latter people were not a few of the best gentry of Ireland. Men who, for one reason or another

—from a roving disposition—and this was particularly so in the case of young men coming into their property from a love of adventure, as to which no country promised fairer than the American Colonies ; or, from distaste for the social institutions of their native land and a desire for change and variety.

It was perhaps in some degree due to all of these reasons put together, that Squire Hugh O'Brien, of a well-born and well-to-do Irish family, had emigrated some ten years before the period of our story, and had settled, with his belongings, at the locality to which we are now about to direct the attention of the reader.

The Squire had come into his father's property only a year prior to his emigration, a course upon which he had determined some time before the death of the old Squire had made it feasible.

He was at this time a man in the prime of life, about thirty-five years of age, educated at Trinity College, had been accustomed to the best resources of Dublin as to society, and for whom foreign travel had done all that was essential or possible in the adding of culture and refinement to a nature well born and bred, and fully susceptible of assuming these qualities.

His family consisted of his wife—who was the daughter of an Irish Earl, and who had passed several seasons in London, and been presented at Court ; a daughter, at the time of their removal to the Colonies, not yet in her teens ; and a son, a bright boy of about seven years.

The Squire having turned so much of his paternal estate as was under his control into money, had in-

vested a portion of this in a large property, consisting at the time of wood land, well watered ; this investment leaving him, however, with a handsome sum in British consols, then just organized under the act of 1757, and already a favorite security for investment throughout the British Islands.

The lands which had been purchased by Squire O'Brien had been carefully examined and surveyed by his agents before buying, and consisting of many hundred acres, formed an estate which, under proper treatment, could hardly fail to become of great value.

This prospective increase had been foreseen by the Squire, who was a farmer far in advance of the average in his knowledge of the best methods of treating the soil, and of taking advantage of whatever natural conditions might be presented. He had, in emigrating, supplied himself with the best men from his own farms, and on arriving in Carolina had wisely supplemented these by the addition of overseers accustomed to the management of slave labor, which was, of course, the only labor to be used to advantage in this country and at this time. Availing himself of the best of the rude tools then employed by farmers, and even in many instances improving on these from his own skill and inventive faculty, his cultivation of the land had proved even more successful than he had anticipated.

At the time of which we write, his extensive and rich fields were an attraction which frequently brought visits from foreigners inspecting the country with a view to settlement, and amply repaid the labor and skill ex-

pended upon them in the remuneration of large and excellent crops. Fine timber filled such of the wood land as was not cleared for farming; considerable streams enabled the easy transportation of logs to whatever part of the estate might be desired; and the enormous quantities of game of all kinds with which the forest abounded, supplied the Squire's table to an extent and of a quality not dreamed of in the castles of Scotland, or the old manor houses of England or Ireland.

The farm buildings were numerous and extensive. In the center, but removed a considerable distance from these, and overlooking them, was the family mansion, which, now ten years old, had begun to assume an appearance of antiquity sufficient to give it the tone and dignity which should properly characterize such a structure.

A long and broad two-storied stone building, built of material quarried on the estate, it was massive, yet handsome and graceful, having a piazza running the full length in front, with a roof supported by Corinthian columns.

An extensive and beautiful lawn sloped down to the stream which rushed with considerable force a few hundred yards below. Fine old trees shaded this lawn, and made the broad and well-kept carriage-way to the house always an attractive and interesting drive. The stables were commodious, and contained fine saddle-horses, while large and well-constructed and thoroughly-equipped barns were occupied by the best breeds of cattle, then being first imported into the Colonies.

It was a bright and beautiful spring day at the time of which we have been relating, and the estate which we have attempted to describe, presented as fair an aspect as could well be imagined.

The luxuriant foliage ; the grassy lawn carefully cut and trimmed ; in the distant fields the negroes seen working, apparently cheerful and happy ; the negro quarters, liberally and well kept ; the overseers riding about, directing farming operations ; the songs of many birds ; the bloom of blossoms on the trees and in the fields ; and the distant sound of the wood-chopper's axe—all of this afforded a delightful scene, pleasing at once to eye and ear.

Beautiful, indeed, it appeared to two young people who could be seen crossing the rude bridge that spanned the stream, and entering the drive which led to the mansion.

A young man, handsome and finely proportioned, who rode his spirited horse like a Centaur, and whose dress, the usual riding costume of the gentry of the period, was eminently picturesque ; and beside him a lovely girl, clad in a riding habit, whose appearance gave token equally of the fearless and accomplished horsewoman, and the cultured and refined lady. These were the two in question.

As the pair reached the solid road after passing the bridge, the mettlesome steeds, which had been curbed in for the moment, started into a brisk canter, and in a few moments brought their riders to the broad piazza of Squire O'Brien's residence.

The cavalier leaped from his horse, and in an instant was ready to help the young lady alight. Almost at the same moment half a dozen colored servants made their appearance, and led the smoking horses around to the stables.

Giving the lady his hand to assist her to ascend the flight of steps which led to the piazza, while she gathered up her habit and displayed a dainty foot by the movement, he said to her :

"Well, Maude, are you tired after our long excursion?"

"Not in the least, Harry. How could I be with such an escort?"

"I wish I could half believe what you say," the young man whispered in her ear, as several persons appeared at the doorway above them.

She gave him a quick, flashing look, and said, archly :

"It would hardly be worth my while to encourage you in a *half* belief."

The young man dropped her hand and looked confused ; but if he was about to reply he did not, for at that moment they were interrupted by Squire O'Brien, his wife, and one or two others who had come forward from the interior of the house to meet them.

"Welcome home," said the Squire. "We began to think you had either been lost, which was not likely, or had run away with each other, which, to tell you the truth, was the solution of your delay which I preferred."

The girl prudently made no comment upon this salu-

tation, but, bowing gracefully, passed into the house, leaving her companion to get out of the difficulty as best he could. Our young gentleman had by this time recovered his equanimity, and was not in the least embarrassed.

"Your conclusion, Uncle, has at least the merit of originality, and I am quite of your opinion. Of the two it is to be preferred. So far as I am concerned, I should decidedly rather have run away with Coz, than have had the disgrace of losing her in the woods, not to speak of myself."

"Hugh," said Lady O'Brien to her husband, "I am surprised that you should make light of serious matters. What a dreadful suggestion, to be sure, that Harry should run away with our Maude; and how very low!"

"My dear, it was only a jest, as Harry understood it, I am quite certain."

"Excuse me, Uncle," observed the other, as though quite seriously. "I supposed you were in dead earnest. But I will, if your Ladyship will allow me, retire to dress for dinner, and by and by we will relate our adventures."

Escaping thus, he left the party, and retired to his room. Lady O'Brien, however, who was a good deal of a martinet with her husband, and had no idea whatsoever of the value or uses of a jest, did not fail to improve the opportunity, by taking his arm and leading him to one side, while she administered a continuance of her reproof for his frivolity.

We will now turn our attention to the remaining persons who had made their appearance on the piazza with the Squire and his lady. These were three in number, and though they had kept silence while the colloquy was going on, they were evidently amused auditors.

Two of these were gentlemen: one a man about fifty, with hair slightly turning, and with a finely-cut and intelligent face, a tall and impressive figure, and, from his dress, evidently a clergyman; the other was a slim and graceful though muscular-appearing young gentleman, rather foppish in his attire, and with an air of elegance about him which showed that he was a person of condition. They were, in fact, the Reverend Orin Bullock and young Thomas Hardeman, whose father owned a neighboring property.

The third of the group was a lady of advanced years, whose silvery hair worn in the fashion known as Pompadour, then prevalent in society, gave her a majestic and dignified appearance, which was sustained by a tall and rather stout, though well-proportioned figure, set off in a black silk brocade dress, and laces whose tint and texture displayed their age and value.

This lady was Madame Rawlings, as she was always addressed, being French by birth, the wife of one of the officers of Council of the Governor of the province, and who was visiting Squire O'Brien with her husband.

The Squire was by this time at one extreme end of the piazza, and engaged in what appeared to be very earnest conversation with his wife.

"I should say," observed young Hardeman, "that the Squire was getting what the natives here call a pretty lively setting down."

The rector turned his face the other way, and did not look altogether pleased at the remark, but Madame Rawlings laughed outright, apparently enjoying the situation with all the delight of a woman of the world, which she was by experience and proclivity at once.

"You are a sad boy, Thomas," she remarked, "and should not make comments on your elders"—

"And betters," interjected the youth in reply to this reproval.

"I did not say so," she continued, "but you are welcome to the improvement."

"Dear Madame," he replied, "would it not be hard to cut us off on account of our youth from enjoyment of the vanities into which we also must doubtless fall in our mature years?"

For answer to this she tapped him on the arm with her delicate white hand, and glanced in the direction of the rector, who was studiously contemplating the landscape.

Hardeman shrugged his shoulders; then, turning on his heel, he brought forward two chairs, one of which he offered to Madame Rawlings. Turning to the rector, he said:

"My dear sir, we have some time to wait for dinner. Will you not be seated?"

The rector turned sharply about, but quite incompetent to withstand the courteous manner of the other,

bowed, and with a word of thanks took the proffered chair, which he established beside that of Madame Rawlings. Under cover of her pocket-handkerchief, that lady was making an obvious endeavor to conceal her laughter at the quick-witted movement of her young friend, and its entire success.

He, however, with as serious an air as if the idea of making game of a grave and reverend doctor in theology had never entered his decorous mind, commenced a conversation with Dr. Bullock, which was apparently of interest to the latter, and the two were immediately engaged earnestly in question, rejoinder, attack, and counter-attack, which, indeed, was the constant habit of their lives.

The Squire and Lady O'Brien having now concluded the matter between them, approached the others, and the former addressed himself to Madame Rawlings, while her Ladyship retired.

"Your husband has not returned," he said.

"Not yet, Squire. Indeed, it may be some hours before he arrives."

"Let me see—he left here on Tuesday, and this is Friday."

"Oh, yes. He has had ample time to go and return; but I fancy from what he told me, that the troubles at Hillsborough may detain him possibly longer than he anticipated."

"I know little," responded the Squire, "of the details of those troubles but the bare outline he gave us, and a few flying rumors with regard to the riotous

proceedings. Are you of the opinion that he will find it necessary to take immediate steps in the matter?"

"No, I imagine not. He seemed only desirous of informing himself fully, or as fully as was practicable, as to the nature and objects of the outbreak."

"Well, I could have told him that," said the Squire, briskly. "The nature of the outbreak is conspiracy and riot on the part of a number of malignants, and the object is to save themselves from paying any taxes."

"Papa, are you not a little hard on them?"

The Squire turned quickly, and observed that his daughter had approached noiselessly, and now stood close beside him.

"Pooh, pooh, Maude! you know nothing of these affairs. What a democrat she is, to be sure!" he added, appealing to the Madame.

"My dear," said the latter, addressing the young lady, "if you had had my training in France, you would hesitate to become what your father—jokingly, I am sure, calls you."

"Dear Madame! believe me, papa means just what he says. He thinks I am a terrible democrat because I can not bear to see poor people who can not help themselves, put upon by those in power."

Madame Rawlings colored slightly at this, and the young girl, perceiving, with her ready woman's wit, the inference that might be drawn from the remark, hastened to explain it.

"Pardon me, Madame. You must know that I could not refer in that speech to those high in office in the

King's service. But you, with your thorough acquaintance with affairs in the Colonies, will be willing to admit, I am sure, that those high officials are not always successful in their choice of subordinates."

"Well, girl," laughed the Squire, as Madame Rawlings' face cleared, "you were getting yourself into a pretty scrape."

"But you must admit that she got herself out of it with a delicacy and neatness which even you, with all your Irish quickness, could hardly excel."

"You are both of you so complimentary," said Maude, and at the same moment she courtesied gracefully to the two, "that I can not but plume myself on an error which brings me such delicate flattery."

"Ha! Ha!" laughed Madame Rawlings. "It will never do for you to go through life on that system. An error, though graciously received, or gracefully atoned for, should never be permitted to become the parent of others."

"No, indeed! No, indeed!" said the Squire. "Errors, thus perpetuated, make a most disagreeable and uncomfortable brood."

"Well, papa," pursued Maude, "I have not yet got the Madame either to assent or dissent to my proposition."

"What a logician the girl is!" and Madame Rawlings touched Maude's cheek daintily with her forefinger. "My dear, I very willingly concede that this beautiful country has not been as successful in its human as in the rest of its natural productions, and that

the natives, when elevated in station, do not in the least honor either their improved position or the people among whom they have had the fortune or misfortune to be born."

"How does that strike your logical mind, young lady?" said the Squire.

By this time the rector and young Hardeman had become interested in the conversation going on near them, and were both listening earnestly.

Maude's lithe figure seemed to rise several inches in stature. Passages at arms were not in the least uncommon between the Madame and herself.

"How unfortunate it is," she said, "that at least one charge the gentlemen are pleased to make against ladies, and which one might wish were inaccurate, is unfortunately so often proved to be true."

"And that charge?" said Madame Rawlings, bridling.

"That they can never say a pleasant thing without immediately counteracting its agreeable influence by enunciating a sharp one."

"Really, Maude," began the Squire deprecatingly.

The girl lifted her hand, signifying by the gesture that she had not concluded.

"A moment's reflection," she continued, "would have told you, Madame, that the subordinate officers in this Colony, to whom I have alluded, are not, as a rule, natives. Quite on the contrary, they are usually Scotch and English adventurers, who, owing to misfortunes (we will say) at home, have come hither to retrieve themselves; and who are too often sustained by authority

which would be more wisely and generously displayed in supporting the honest and respectable, though poor natives, whom you condemn."

The girl's color had heightened; her small, shapely head was poised erect on her graceful neck, and her clear gray eyes showed defiance, ready for any one who might contradict her. She looked like a beautiful creature at bay, and charged upon by a multitude of pursuers.

Her position in an argument of the character of this one, was, in fact, not agreeable, for all of those present were in their hearts opposed to her opinions, and she knew quite well that the next moment would witness an avalanche of opposition pouring upon her devoted head.

She had barely ceased speaking, however, when her cousin appeared. Drawing a long breath she cast him a look over her shoulder, which was so appealing, and at the same time so intelligent, that the young man appreciated instinctively the situation. Approaching, he said quickly:

"What is it, Coz? Are we poor natives under the rod again? You see I caught your last words, although I have not the least idea what has gone before."

At this moment the loud clang of the dinner-bell was heard, and as the Squire gave a sigh of relief, Madame Rawlings rose to her feet, and masking her discomfort at the, to her, inopportune arrival of reinforcements for Maude, accepted the proffered arm of the rector, and led the way within the house.

Harry claimed the just reward for his fortunate appearance by taking his cousin by the hand and following, while the Squire and Hardeman brought up the rear, the latter remarking, after his customary cynical fashion, as they crossed the threshold:

“Squire, that was the hottest fire I ever saw that didn’t get past smouldering.”

“My boy,” said the other, clapping him on the shoulder, “don’t be in a hurry. One can never be certain that he has surmounted a difficulty until its full nature at least has been presented to him.”

CHAPTER VI.

How Daniel Boone disappeared, and how the most important characters in our narrative were set searching for him, and with what success ; with a hint at a romance to be hereinafter further developed.

THE dining-room at "Mount Mourne"—which was the name the Squire had given his mansion, after a range of hills in Ireland—was a large and lofty room, wainscoted in oak and furnished in the same material. A long and heavy oak table occupied the center of the room ; a massive sideboard, brilliant with silver plate, nearly filled one end of it ; and carved arm-chairs, with a few smaller tables, completed the furniture.

On the walls, besides framed engravings of game, or sporting scenes, were hung antlers and other trophies of the hunt. A large open fire-place with a broad mantel, the whole of handsomely carved woodwork, displayed an enormous fire of great logs ; for at this season in this part of Carolina the evenings were usually cold. Handsome candelabra, with wax candles, were placed in readiness for lighting the table, which was covered with a damask table-cloth, and displayed a fine service of Dresden china. The dining-hour being two o'clock, artificial illumination was not needed.

Everything about the apartment, as indeed was the

case throughout the dwelling, gave evidence of great wealth and excellent taste.

Lady O'Brien, although a member of the oldest aristocracy of Ireland, had been trained, as was the custom in those days, in every department of housewifery, and was a thorough and capable manager. Although inclined to pride herself on her birth and early associations and education, and while being, withal, a stickler for all the forms and ceremonies of social courtesy and manner, she was not the less an excellent and lavish hostess.

The party who now sat down to table included besides those we have named, Mlle. Raimonde, who had been Maude's French teacher and governess in her earlier youth, and had accompanied the family to America, and still remained on as a companion to Maude and a firmly-attached member of the household. She was a prim-looking, rather graceful spinster of about forty years of age, who said little unless addressed; who spoke English with a very slight accent, however, and correctly as to grammar, and could converse intelligently on most of the questions of the day.

A place left vacant beside that of Madame Rawlings betokened that the absent husband of that lady was not unexpected.

The servants who waited at table were negroes, and in livery, this being a concession to the notions of Lady O'Brien, willingly accorded by her husband, who, indeed, interfered little or none in her management of the domestic affairs, it being perfectly understood be-

tween them that she was to have as little voice in the direction of those which were external.

Although the Squire frequently antagonized his daughter's rather advanced ideas with regard to republicanism and democracy, he was himself not in the least given to very pronounced aristocratic opinions. In his treatment of the farm hands and of his overseers his manner was cordial and genial, and he was universally liked. Among his equals he was affable and agreeable, but held himself with dignity.

General conversation went on as the meal progressed, the party having tacitly agreed to dismiss the subject which had occupied several of them immediately before that meal, and which seemed to have reached a point where it was not desirable for it to be immediately renewed. But it was in the minds of several of them, as the occasional glances between Maude and her cousin, and the somewhat conventional manner of Madame Rawlings surely betokened. A diversion brought this subject uppermost when the meal was about half through. The clattering of a horse's hoofs had been heard, and Madame Rawlings remarked briefly :

“That is my husband !”

And in a few moments the door opened to admit the gentleman in question, who, immediately, after general salutation, took his seat beside his wife and became engaged in discussing the viands before him. He was not permitted, however, to eat at peace, being at once beset with questions from all directions.

"How did you get through the Hillsborough matter?" asked the Squire.

"And do tell us," chimed in his lady, "if that unfortunate Scotchman, McCandless, was killed or no!"

"And were there many of the poor people injured?" asked Maude, and nearly every one looked disturbed at the question.

"One at a time, my good friends," said Mr. Rawlings, who was a reserved-looking gentleman of about fifty years, who stooped at the shoulders, and whose face was innocent of beard or whisker; a man apparently cut out for a diplomatic or official position, if such characters should signify their vocations in their countenances.

"One at a time, if you please—consider that I am on his Majesty's business, besides being, as you all know, not in the least given to talking on my own account."

There was a general laugh at this, for the Governor's counselor was noted for talking a great deal and saying very little. His reserve, so far as reticence was concerned, existing only in his face, where, like Lord Burleigh's nod, it stood for any amount of wisdom.

"But, to tell you the truth," he continued, as the last course was being removed, and dessert and coffee were placed on the table. "Thank you," he added in parenthesis, bowing to the Squire, who was drinking wine with him. "To tell you the truth, I have done nothing but listen, since I have been away, to all sorts of people telling about all sorts of wrongs, until I feel

as if I had been deprived of my own rights, and am quite ready to talk about any subject in the world—except this one.’

“But, my dear sir,” put in Hardeman, “that’s hardly kind to us who are so anxious and so interested.”

“Well, it is not altogether a pleasant topic, as indeed these local squabbles seldom are; but in a nutshell it amounts to just this: McCandless, who is a grocer by trade and tax-collector by profession, does not stop with giving short weight in his groceries, but applies the same principle reversed to his mode of collecting taxes. Of that there can be no sort of doubt. Whether it is the one grievance or the other which is uppermost in the minds of his enemies, I do not know. But that he has enemies for one or the other reason, and perhaps both, his bruised and shattered frame relates with unquestionable accuracy.”

“Was he badly hurt?” inquired the Squire.

“Yes. Pretty nearly pounded to pieces. The affair begun by his putting a boy out of his store for impudence, as he said—though this is denied by others—and by his being badly thrashed by the boy’s father, one Daniel Boone, a hunter from up back of here somewhere, and who is suspected to be in league with the Regulators.”

“Oh! I know him,” said Harry Calvert, who had not yet spoken. “He is no Regulator. He is a very brave, straightforward man, who has gone farther west, I guess, in the woods, and seen more hairbreadth ’scapes from bears and Indians than anybody else in the Carolinas.”

"Well, however that may be," said Mr. Rawlings, continuing, "he began the trouble, intentionally or not. He retrieved himself afterward by a remarkable feat of marksmanship."

"Indeed! What was that?" said several about the table.

"Why, there was a fellow named Caleb Glennie, a Sheriff who came with Judge Anderson from Granville, in pursuance of his duties in the court-room, and who seems to have been a particular object of popular animosity, for what reason I did not discover. However, the rioters captured him and were about hanging him, having proceeded so far as to have the rope about his neck and himself dangling in the air, when this man Boone fired a ball from his rifle which cut the rope in two, and let the man to the ground. He was not so much injured but that he was able to escape to his friends.

"Judge Anderson very properly, considering the state of the town—for by this time they were pillaging the stores, burning the houses, and shooting with their rifles and horse-pistols, right and left—the Judge, I say, concluded not to hold court, and withdrew with his people to Granville."

"How was the riot finally quelled?" asked Madame Rawlings.

"Why, by the people themselves. I mean those of the town, who, seeing their property being destroyed, however much they sympathized with the Regulators, could not willingly submit to loss on their own account.

BUT the most curious incident of the whole matter occurred some two or three days after the affair, that is to say, one day last week, and in regard to this very Daniel Boone of whom I have spoken.

"It appears that he had incurred the enmity of the Regulators, although he was the first one to attack McCandless. They could not overlook his rescue of the Sheriff, while his departure with Judge Anderson and a visit that he appears to have made at the Judge's house, still further aroused their anger against him. After he left Granville on his homeward journey, he stopped overnight with a fellow by the name of Howell, Rednap Howell, who is himself suspected of being concerned with the Regulators.

"Boone left there in the morning with his little boy on his horse before him, and continued on to a point a few miles from Hillsborough, where he had a relative residing. He stopped there part of one day and overnight, and departed on the following morning.

"A few hours later the little boy came back to the house crying bitterly, and stated that his father had been surrounded by a band of men who had attacked him, pulled him from his horse, and though he fought hard, and succeeded in wounding one of them severely, had overpowered him.

"They then placed him on his horse, tied his hands behind him, and his feet under the horse's belly, and led him away, leaving the boy to take care of himself. The little fellow had followed the road, and found his way back to the point whence they started."

"Why, what a terrible act!" said Maude, whose feelings were at once enlisted in favor of the hunter, to whose bravery and energy her cousin had borne witness.

"Yes, young lady, you are right," said her father "it was a terrible act, and you must remember that the atrocious villains who conducted it were the very ones whom you are inclined to favor."

The girl colored up and hardly knew what to say. As before, Harry Calvert came to her rescue.

"But, Mr. Rawlings, why should these men attack Boone and carry him off if there were any grounds for the suspicion that he was one of them, as you hinted a while ago?"

"And certainly," added Maude, plucking up courage, "if there were any truth in that, Judge Anderson would not have invited him to visit him at his residence."

"Well, I can hardly explain the matter myself. I only heard of this latter occurrence after I had left Hillsborough, and was on my way hither, and what I say is based upon rumor."

"It may be," remarked the Squire, "that the Regulators hoped to cajole or threaten Boone into joining them."

"Very likely," said the other.

"I don't believe," observed Harry, "from what I know of Boone, that any attempt of that kind will meet with success. He is not the sort of man to be either cajoled or threatened into any course to which he did not give his approval."

"But, in the meantime," cried Maude, excitedly, "this unfortunate man is held in confinement, perhaps abused and tortured by his captors, and as for that," she added, looking at her father, "I know nothing, of course, about the particular men who have seized Boone. All my commiseration goes to the mass of people whom I see aroused to acts of violence by their necessitous condition and ill-treatment."

"Yes, yes," said the Squire, quickly. "You are all right in theory, girl, but you had much better keep your opinions theoretical, and not attempt to identify yourself with individual cases."

"But, certainly, Squire," said the rector, who up to this time had been an interested but silent listener,

Miss Maude is right in taking into consideration the case of this man Boone. I have heard of him, and have heard nothing but good. He seems to be, from all accounts, an honest fellow, and it certainly seems that this capture by the Regulators should be considered as to his advantage. Something ought to be done for him."

"That is exactly what I meant," said Maude, with a grateful smile at the rector; "he ought to be looked for, found, and rescued."

"More easily said than done, young lady," remarked Mr. Rawlings. "His captors have the advantage of several days' start, and they are desperate men, who would stop at nothing to carry out their objects. I can assure you, Miss O'Brien, that I quite sympathize with you in your kindly feeling in behalf of a brave

man, and so far as any influence or power I have can effect anything, will gladly aid in discovering what has been done with him, and restore him to his family if possible."

"Thank you, sir," cried Maude, eagerly. "If only all our rulers were like you"——

"Tut, tut, girl!" exclaimed the Squire. "Don't let us get on that subject again."

"Well," said Harry, who had been very thoughtful for a few moments. "I have made up my mind"——

"Oh, Harry! To do what?" cried Maude, beaming upon him, with smiles and expectation struggling in her countenance.

"I am going to hunt for Daniel Boone, and rescue him if I can find him."

"Bravo, Harry!" and she clapped her hands, and appeared delighted with the determination of her cousin.

"I shall call for volunteers," said the young man. "So whoever is ready to join me must be prepared, for I shall set out immediately."

"Well, Calvert," said Thomas Hardeman, in his lazy way, "if you don't get more volunteers than you want, and I haven't an idea you will, you can count on me."

"I am hardly equal to a search of this character," observed Mr. Rawlings, "but I hold to what I said to Miss O'Brien, a moment ago. If you need any assistance that I can properly give, I shall be glad to afford it."

"Really," said Harry, looking about him. "Mr Boone does not seem to be altogether without friends

after all. I dare say I shall have quite a respectable following."

There was a pause in the conversation at this moment, and Lady O'Brien took advantage of it to glance at Madame Rawlings, whereupon the ladies arose and left the table to repair to the drawing-room.

The gentlemen being left over their wine, the subject was resumed and discussed by all present, none of whom, however emphatic their opinions might be on the general question of loyalty to the laws and the King's officers, felt the slightest animosity toward the victim of the present attack.

The Squire, to be sure, who was rather an easy-going man, and seldom troubled himself about occurrences that did not immediately concern him, did not particularly interest himself in the matter, but listened patiently, and occasionally threw in a word by way of suggestion, as the plan of operations was discussed.

"I would like to take Mike, sir," said Harry, addressing the Squire, "if you can spare him."

"Why, my boy, what do you want of him? He will only get you into some scrape."

"Well, you know, Mike is accustomed to me, and we understand each other. He is muscular, which is one reason I want him, and quick-witted, which is another."

"And besides," put in the rector, "he knows almost everybody, and has a way of his own for obtaining information which I never saw equaled."

"Oh! Well, well," said the Squire, "if you want

him, and he don't object to going, you can take him, I am sure."

"Oh, he won't object to going," said Harry. "The chance of a 'scrimmage,' as he will call it, will give the affair charms for him, which will be quite sufficient to make up for any hardships he may be called upon to endure."

"Hardships?" said Hardeman.

Everybody laughed. The young man was rather proud of his reputation as a gentleman of leisure, and who had never undergone anything in the nature of hardship.

"Well," explained Harry. "I don't want to underestimate the matter. We shall have some hard riding for one thing."

Oh, I don't mind that!" said Hardeman.

"No, I know you don't. You are one of the best horsemen, and you have one of the best mounts in the Colonies; but then we shall have to do some covert work, and generally dodge these fellows, when we find who they are, and it may come to a fight at last."

"Well, there is nothing in all that that appals me."

"Also," continued Harry, "we shall probably have to camp out."

"I like that. I do it every season for fun."

"Well, that fills the catalogue, I think; at least for what can be prepared for in advance. So you are accepted."

The gentlemen now rose from the table to join the

ladies, and as they were passing through the door into the main hall, Harry remarked to Mr. Rawlings :

"I think, sir, that although they have the start of us, there is a fair chance of our finding Boone, even now."

He spoke in quite a loud tone of voice. At the same moment a servant approached the Squire, and with a gesture of his hand toward the hall, said :

"There's a gemman wants to see you, massa Squire."

"Where is he?" said the Squire, looking about.

The negro turned from one side to another, apparently surprised.

"He done stood there a moment ago, massa. 'Fore God, I can't tell where he done gone to."

A deep voice said, slowly, "I am the gentleman who was inquiring for Squire O'Brien."

Turning at the sound, the party who were leaving the dining-room saw the surprising figure of Rafe Slaughter.

The negro had sprung to one side, scared at the sound of the voice coming from an unexpected quarter, and now took his departure, muttering to himself—

"Golly ! I specs he Obi man, dat buckra."

There was a dead silence as all present gazed at the strange figure of Judge Anderson's secretary. To this species of reception Rafe was so accustomed that it did not in the least embarrass him. As Squire O'Brien had stepped forward, he addressed him :

"I have a note of introduction for you, sir, from Judge Anderson, of Granville."

"Oh, indeed !" cried the Squire. "My old friend,

Dick Anderson. Any one armed with credentials from him may be sure of a good reception in this house. Gentlemen, if you will excuse me, I will join you again presently."

The others proceeded leisurely to the drawing-room, while the Squire led Rafe to an apartment on the opposite side of the hall, which was his private sanctum, office, and library, though as to the latter function it presented but little in the way of resources.

As they entered, the Squire pointed to a chair, at the same time receiving from the hand of Rafe the letter from Judge Anderson. Bowing in apology as he seated himself, he perused it carefully, and, on concluding, folded it and placed it in a drawer in the table beside him.

"Mr. Slaughter, the Judge refers me to you as his confidential secretary and personal friend and intimate associate. I am glad to know you."

"My commission from Judge Anderson to yourself, sir, is simply to this effect: That after reading the letter you will have the kindness to transmit to him, in writing, your acceptance or declination of the proposition which it contains, and as to the particulars of which I understand you are already fully informed."

"That is perfectly correct, sir," replied the Squire. "I shall take pleasure in doing as the Judge desires."

"Now, sir," continued Rafe, "if you will excuse the liberty, I am going to ask you a question arising from a remark which I chanced to overhear as you and your friends were coming out from dinner."

"You could not well avoid overhearing whatever was said," remarked the Squire, a little surprised, however "and I am sure you are at liberty to make any comment upon it, or ask any questions regarding it, which you may desire. I know very well, that a gentleman endorsed by my friend Richard Anderson, would not be likely to take any improper advantage of such liberty."

Rafe bowed and proceeded: "I heard a young gentleman remark, 'There's a fair chance of our finding Boone, even now!' If that remark referred to Daniel Boone, and, as I am led to suppose, anything untoward has happened to him, not only is it a matter of grave interest to me from my personal acquaintance with the man, but it is still more so to the Judge, and may incidentally concern yourself hereafter in the event of your accepting his proposition."

"By Jove!" said the Squire, at the same time opening the drawer in which he had placed Judge Anderson's letter, which he took hurriedly in his hands, and, opening it, proceeded to read again carefully. "Yes, the Judge alludes here to some one to whom he purposes entrusting a mission," and he scanned closely the face of the secretary as he spoke, "and I would not be surprised if Daniel Boone were the man to whom he refers."

"Daniel Boone is precisely that man," said the other.

"God bless my soul, what an extraordinary coincidence!" and at once the Squire proceeded to relate to the listener the facts which have already been made

known to the reader through the statement of Mr. Rawlings.

Rafe was, indeed, not only an interested, but an excited listener. The serious importance of this unexpected interference with the plans of his employer was at once plain to him, and consideration of it impressed him gravely.

Perceiving how concerned his guest appeared to be, the Squire relieved his mind by assuring him that measures were already on foot for a search for the lost hunter. On hearing this, nothing would do but the Squire must at once present Rafe to Harry Calvert as a new volunteer for the expedition.

They accordingly adjourned to the drawing-room, where Rafe was introduced to the ladies, and on the subject of Boone being mooted, soon showed that he was a warm adherent of the cause of the unfortunate hunter.

Rafe had, in fact, formed a profound regard for Boone; besides, his devotion to his employer's interest, to which he knew the hunter to be essential, made him specially anxious for his safety. He at once spoke in the highest terms of Boone's character, and his enthusiasm soon fired the rest.

Maude was charmed with the eccentric little secretary, and nothing would do for any of them now but the greatest possible speed and immediate action. Even young Hardeman became aroused out of his customary placidity and as earnest as the rest.

In less than an hour the details of the expedition had

been arranged, horses ordered and brought around to the piazza; saddle-bags hurriedly packed, rifles selected, and ammunition stored away; pistols placed in their respective holsters, and the dinner dress of the young men changed for a more appropriate costume.

"But where is Mike?" cried Harry as these preparations had been nearly concluded.

There was a loud cry for Mike, and one negro after another was sent in search of him. In a few moments that personage stood on the piazza before them, a thick-set, middle-aged-looking Irishman, with an old greasy cap held in one hand, while he pulled his forelock obsequiously with the other.

"Mike, you are going with me," said Harry sharply.

"I am, your honor!"

"Do you know where you are going?"

"Divil a bit!"

"How long will it take you to get ready?"

"Shure, for what'll I be wanting?"

"Get on some stout clothes, take your gun, have the Baron saddled, bring a pair of pistols with you and a knife, and be as quick as you can about it."

"Is it murdering we are going for?" said Mike.

"Egad! it may come to that. Now do as I bid you

"But, your honor!"

"What is it?"

"Will we be long gone?"

"I wish I knew," said Harry, "but I don't. You may do just the same as if you knew we would be gone six months."

Mike touched his forelock again, and saying, "Bader-shin! I'll be ready in ten minutes," vanished, and in about that time he appeared mounted on a raw-boned and ungainly steed which he was accustomed to ride, and which was called the Baron, as Harry said, because he was barren of flesh; and as everything was now in readiness, the gentlemen proceeded to make their *adieux* and mount their several steeds.

Rafe's horse had been taken to the stable on his arrival, and fed, and was now brought out refreshed. The secretary, however, requested, and obtained permission to leave behind him in Squire O'Brien's care, certain papers which he was unwilling to risk carrying with him.

At the last moment Harry Calvert was missing, and as the Squire looked about him he perceived with considerable amusement that Maude was also not to be seen.

"Where is Harry?" said Lady O'Brien.

"Where is Maude?" cried the Squire.

"Nonsense," said she. "You are always putting them together."

"Nonsense, my Lady. They are always going together," and the Squire laughed loud and long.

If the reader could have been present just within the door of the drawing-room, he or she would have witnessed at this juncture a most interesting scene. Harry was not ignorant of all the advantages which his plucky conduct had given him in relation to his cousin Maude, and as the time for setting forth had approach-

ed he had drawn her away from the rest of the party and the two were now engaged in a very affectionate parting scene, which they had all to themselves.

Hearing his name called loudly, he released her from the tender embrace in which he held the blushing girl, and said :

"Then, Maude, I have your promise. No matter who says 'no,' you will join your fortunes to mine as soon as possible, after my return?"

"Yes, Harry, if—" and the girl looked archly at him for a moment, "if you bring back Daniel Boone."

"I will do it if he is alive," said Harry, and with a parting kiss he left her and hurried outside where the others were becoming clamorous at the delay.

Throwing himself on his horse and assuming the lead, the whole party waved their hands and galloped down the drive, Mike bringing up the rear amid a chorus of shouts from the negroes who had gathered to witness their departure.

CHAPTER VII.

Harry Calvert, being formally introduced to the Reader by way of his antecedents, leads his party to Hillsborough. Stephen Roberts sustains his reputation for argumentative capacity, and Mike Dooley succeeds in treeing the coon.

HARRY CALVERT was the son of a half-sister of Lady O'Brien, who had married into the family of the Calverts of Maryland, where Harry was born. The young man was therefore of the best Colonial blood, but, unfortunately, his position as to means could hardly be said to accord with it. It will thus also be seen that the cousinship between Harry and Maude was one degree removed.

The title of Lord Baltimore, which went with the elder branch of the family, was at present held by Frederick Calvert, who lived at the family home in Ireland, and was rich, but childless. In the event of his dying without heirs, Harry would naturally succeed to the Irish property, but not to the title.

In the meantime, our young gentleman, though generally considered an eligible *parti* in a matrimonial sense, so far as his personal character and habits were involved, was not exactly so in the light of fortune. His relative might easily leave his property in some other direction, and his hopes as to that could hardly

be considered thoroughly founded. There was, however, some reason for them, inasmuch as the young man had paid a visit to Ireland, and to the head of the family a few years before, and had been well received. Occasionally, also, since that time, letters had passed between them of rather more than a friendly sort.

To the Squire, who was fond of Harry, the latter appeared entirely satisfactory as a prospective son-in-law, but by Lady O'Brien, whose views concerning fortune were totally opposite to those of her husband, he was looked upon with a very ill-grace in that connection. He was, however, frequently a visitor at Mount Mourne, and, as we have seen, was always well received, passing on occasion months in the society of his fair semi-cousin. The rest of his time he spent in the vicinity of Baltimore, where he had a small plantation, which returned an income sufficiently large to support him, though not extravagantly.

Thus much being said of one who is destined to appear as a principal character in this narrative, we return to the cavalcade which left Squire O'Brien's hospitable mansion and directed their steps toward Hillsborough. Harry rode ahead with the secretary, in whom he had become interested, as representing a different kind of man from any with whom he had before been acquainted, and whose character he felt inclined to study. The two speedily entered into conversation and compared notes with regard to their previous travels and sojourneyings, much to the amusement and satisfaction of each.

Meanwhile, Thomas Hardeman rode a short distance behind, occasionally joining in their conversation, and at other times pleasing himself with the sallies of dry humor which he succeeded in extracting from Mike.

It had been arranged that their first halting should be made at the house of a planter well known to Calvert and Hardeman, who lived about twenty miles from Mount Mourne. Here they arrived at sundown, and without stating the nature of their journey, received an immediate welcome and offer of entertainment for the night.

The party were up betimes on the following morning, and rode hard all day, reaching the immediate vicinity of Hillsborough late in the afternoon, and the town itself as the shades of evening were closing in.

Here Hardeman was acquainted, and volunteered to take the party to where they could be cared for during the night. On the following day, while Mike, under proper directions, remained behind at the little tavern where they had passed the night, the three gentlemen rode on some five or six miles to the south-west of the town where resided one Levi Rodgers, who was a cousin of Boone's wife. They easily found the place, and succeeded in obtaining from the family the meager information which had been conveyed by the lad Jimmy, who had since been taken by a member of his family to his own home on the Yadkin, at the same time conveying the news of the hunter's capture.

The story, as it had been related by Mr. Rawlings, was found to be nearly exact. Boone had been capt-

ured by a number of men, as many as ten, the lad thought, with none of whom he was acquainted. The captured hunter had been carried westward from where he was taken, on the same road just passed over by Calvert and his party. It was probable, however, that he had been soon taken into the bush or in a different direction by one of the cross-roads that intersected that part of Orange County.

There was nothing more to be learned here, and after a few hours our travelers resumed their horses to return to Hillsborough.

Here they found Mike waiting for them with quite a patch of news. He had discovered acquaintances of his own in the town, and as the riot was not yet a nine days' wonder, had no difficulty in getting them to converse freely with regard to it; and not only this, but by a little skillful investigation he had learned the names of three of the men who were undoubtedly engaged in the abduction of Daniel Boone.

These men were Stephen Roberts, the man whom Howell had announced his determination to visit on the morning when Boone left his house; William Butler and Harmon Cox, both of them well-known Regulators. Roberts resided in town, but it was not certain that he had been one of the party actually engaged in the abduction, though it was believed that the affair had been planned and directed by him. Butler and Cox had been missing ever since the outrage.

To this man Roberts, Calvert determined to apply, though not imagining that he would obtain much infor-

mation by so doing. Roberts, who has been described in the opening pages of this work, had a well-authenticated reputation for being a man of great cunning and skill in masking whatever design he might have, or any acts that he might perpetrate. Calvert found him at his house, not far from McCandless' store, and the following brief colloquy took place between them :

" Mr. Roberts, I am in town representing friends of Daniel Boone, a farmer out in Yadkin, who has disappeared within the last week, and of whom no traces can be found. I am told that you know the man, and may possibly be able to give me some information that will relieve the minds of his family and friends concerning him."

Roberts sat regarding the young man sharply while he spoke. When he had concluded, he said :

" I know Daniel Boone very well. I saw him here in Hillsborough with Judge Anderson's party on the day of the riot. He went off with Judge Anderson, as I was afterward told, to visit him over in Granville. I have not seen him since."

" But, there is some talk, Mr. Roberts, of his having been waylaid by a gang of men and kidnapped."

" I know nothing about it ; nothing whatever."

" I have heard, Mr. Roberts, the names of men mentioned in connection with this affair who are known to be associates of yourself."

" Young gentleman, I am a lawyer, a profession that brings me into contact with a great many different kinds of men."

"Particularly criminals and the kind of men that would be apt to perpetrate such an outrage," said Harry.

"Particularly just the kind of men you indicate," returned Roberts. "That, in fact, is one of the misfortunes of my profession."

Here he smiled grimly.

"We can not always control our associates, or my desire would be to have none but such as might, for instance, be represented by young gentlemen of position like yourself."

Harry bowed at this compliment, and began to feel as though he was getting the worst of the argument. He, however, persisted.

"Of course, Mr. Roberts, as you are a lawyer, you are much more accustomed to sophistry than an inexperienced person like myself. I would like, however, in the interests of those I represent, to ask you one or two simple questions."

The other bowed his willingness to listen to the questions.

"Do you know where Daniel Boone is now?"

"I do not."

"Can you tell me if he is alive and in possession of his freedom?"

"I can tell you nothing about him more than I have told. My present knowledge concerning him ends with his leaving Hillsborough to visit Judge Anderson."

"When have you seen Rednap Howell?" said Harry suddenly.

The other flushed a little at this home question, but did not hesitate in his reply.

"I have not seen him in a month. He was not here on the day of the riot."

Harry felt as sure that this was a lie as he could feel of anything, but he had no means of proving it, and as he saw that there was very little to be gained from Mr. Roberts, he terminated the interview by rising, and stating that he had no further questions to ask.

The other accompanied him courteously to the door, and expressed the hope that he would meet with better success in his investigations in the future than had characterized them apparently hitherto.

Harry thanked him with rather a mocking look and returned to his companions quite discomfited with his ill-success.

Mike was absent in pursuit of knowledge, and the three, after a hasty conference, concluded that whatever result they might obtain in the way of finding the lost hunter, must be the work of their own brains and energies.

Without any positive plan in their minds, they made haste to leave the town, and were nearly ready for their departure, when Mike appeared, lugging after him by the arm a red-haired, freckle-faced, overgrown boy about seventeen, who appeared very unwilling to go with him. As they approached, Mike put his hand to his mouth and cried out to Harry in what he meant for a whisper :

"Whist! your honor! Is there anybody near?"

"Not a soul," said Harry, looking round him.

"Then, begorra! I've found out something!"

"What is it, Mike?"

"Ax this rum-looking thafe of the wurruld."

"Well, what is it, my lad? What have you got to tell us?"

"Nawthin', sor."

At this, Mike administered a sound box on the ear of the boy, at which he set up a howl.

"Shtop yer yelpin', ye young shpalpeen. Tell the young gentleman what you told me, or I'll whale the life out of yez!"

"Tell us what you know, my lad, and no harm shall come to you. On the contrary, you shall have half a crown for your trouble."

This proposition appeared to strike the uncouth young person favorably; at least, it acted as a damper on his unearthly whine, which he was still inclined to continue. After a moment's silence and apparent consideration, he said:

"So bein', if yer'll make this here Irishman leave me be, I'll tell yer, an' you won't peach on me."

"Mike, let him alone," cried Harry.

Mike, with an air of injured innocence, released his hold of the boy, who, to his evident disappointment, did not attempt to run away.

"You see, Mister," he said, "I was away up the road the day this man Boone started home. I knowed him from seein' him an' his little boy down yer the day they was fightin', an' I seed Butler and Harman Cox,

an' a lot o' others a waitin' in the road, so I hid in the bush until he come along, an' then I seed them pull him off'n his horse, an' they wos fightin' together and scrimmagin' around on the ground, till Boone, he got licked, and the others tied him up and put him on his horse and took him off"—

Here he stopped.

"Tell the rest, yer varmint!"

'Be silent, Mike," said Harry sternly. "Go on, my lad, you are earning your half-crown."

"Well, Mister, I follered 'em for mor'n a mile. Fust they turned off the road just beyant the bridge over Piny Creek, an' then they took him about half a mile into the woods, an' there there's a kind of hole in the rock as big as a room, and they put him in there, an' three of 'em stayed to watch outside while the rest rode off as fast as they could—an' give you my word that's all I knows about it—give me my half-crown."

Harry laughed, and gave him a half-crown, as he had promised, to which both Hardeman and Rafe Slaughter each added another, whereupon the boy pocketed the three coins, and with a kick up of his foot by way of courtesy to the gentlemen, and a sneer at Mike, dashed down the road into the village, and was lost to sight.

"The red-headed divil!" said Mike, as he fled. "He knows more'n that or my name isn't Mike Dooley."

"Well," said Rafe, "if he knows that, and has told the truth, it's enough for our purpose. Now let us set out."

To this suggestion the other members of the party offered no objection, and in five minutes they were on their horses cantering at a sharp speed up the hill in the direction from which they had come the day previous.

CHAPTER VIII.

Wherein the Reader becomes the witness to an exciting engagement, and the story progresses a material step forward.

THE summer passed, the grain was harvested, the autumn leaves began to color and to fall, and still nothing was heard of the fate of Daniel Boone, either at his home on the Yadkin, or by the solicitous family at Mount Mourne.

Word had been brought occasionally to Squire O'Brien of the party who had set forth so enthusiastically for his rescue, but this amounted to nothing more than that success had not met their endeavors, and that they were still prosecuting the search.

Even such slight information had now failed during many weeks, and much anxiety was felt at Mount Mourne, where were still gathered the guests whom we have already mentioned as visiting there in the spring.

It was the close of a dreary day late in December, a heavy rain-storm, lasting for several days, had overrun the small streams in western North Carolina, and the valleys were in some instances flooded. Dull, leaden-hued clouds rested low down on the hill-tops; the trees drained water from every twig; such roads as there were had now become nearly impassable.

On the side of a hill, some fifty rods above a small water-course, now swollen and turbulent from the storm, stood a small log hut, from the openings in which, that answered for windows, could be seen the only light to be discerned for miles around. The place was secluded, on a road seldom traveled, and lonely.

In the first of the two rooms into which this rude dwelling was divided, a large fire blazed on the hearth-stone, and afforded all the light there was, but that in quite sufficient quantity for the necessities of the three occupants of the apartment.

Of these three, two have not been before presented to the reader. One was a short, heavily-built and muscular-looking man of middle age, whose features were repulsive, and whose thick dark hair was matted over his forehead, while a heavy beard, untrimmed, made his face still more unpleasing. His companion was younger, and beardless, but with a form that displayed the material for considerable strength and nervous activity.

Both were clad in homespun, and the elder man exhibited in the belt around his waist a heavy horse-pistol. Against the side of the room near them rested two rifles.

These two men were lying on the hearth in front of the fire; the elder one smoking, the other not occupied in any way.

Ten feet away from them, in the shadow, there lay on a pile of straw the figure of a tall man, apparently sleeping. His head was resting upon one arm and his eyes were closed.

A blast of wind of unusual violence suddenly burst open the door of the dwelling, startling the two men on the hearth, who sprang to their feet, while the rain poured in through the opening in torrents.

"Curse the wind!" said the stout man, as he hurried to the door and closed it.

"No need for you to move," he continued, as, turning at a sound in the corner, he observed that the man lying there had risen to a sitting posture, and was gazing at him.

The man was Daniel Boone; but so altered in his appearance, so cadaverous in his features, and worn and depressed in his expression, that he could hardly have been recognized.

In his present posture, it could be seen that he was chained to one of the logs which formed the side of the cabin, the chain being fastened to a strong leathern belt which encircled his waist.

His arms were free, as also his lower limbs. Around his neck was tied, by the sleeves, a heavy homespun coat. Otherwise, he was dressed in his usual buckskin hunting-shirt and leggings. On his feet were moccasins.

"I only looked," he said, in answer to the speech of the other.

"Well, don't look!" growled the latter, as having turned in the massive lock the cumbrous key and bestowed the latter in his pocket, he returned to his place by the hearth.

Boone laid down again and was quiet.

For a few minutes there was silence, except that from the apartment in the rear could be heard the sound of snoring, and that apparently of several persons. This noise was indeed so audible in the stillness, that presently the younger man of the two by the fire growled out :

"Confound those fellows! Why can't they sleep quietly! There's no need to make such a row!"

"They're lucky to be able to sleep at all," said his companion. "I have had so much of this sort of thing that I can't sleep when I try to."

"You've had no more of it than I have," muttered the other.

"Yes, but you've had a lay-off of two weeks, while I've been here ever since the last week in March, and now we are close on to Christmas."

"That's so; but my outing did me very little good. It takes so infernally long to get anywhere from this out-of-the-way place. I was only four days in Hillsborough, and two of them were taken up by Roberts with his blasted directions and injunctions."

"How much longer do you suppose we are going to have to keep up this watch?" said the stout man, rising up on his elbows.

"Well, you know as much about it as I do. I asked Butler when he came this afternoon, but he was dead tired, and wouldn't give me any satisfaction, if he knew anything, which I doubt."

"How many came in with him?" said the other, after a moment's silence. "I was out, you know, when they got here."

"There were six in all. Butler and Cox, Inwood Charley Cleeves, and two others I don't know."

"What do you suppose they come for?"

"Well, Butler said something about taking him away," and he jerked his thumb toward the corner where Boone was now, to judge from his heavy breathing, apparently sleeping quietly. "I suspect that they've got orders to take him down to the coast and ship him somewhere."

If there had been any one present remarking Boone at this moment, he would have had a suspicion as to the depth of his somnolency. There was perceptible a slight movement of the eyelids, while one of his hands clenched with a quick muscular movement.

"I hope to God they will," said the stout man. "I've had all the watching of him I want."

"Well, he don't give much trouble," observed the other.

"No; he don't get much chance. But, I tell you, if he wasn't watched close, he would get outside of this here cabin quicker'n lightning."

To this remark the other made no response, but changed his position for an easier one, and was apparently making preparations for repose.

His companion, observing this, presently rose to his feet, and going to a rude table near the door, helped himself to a portion of the contents of a jug which had been placed there, using for the purpose a small pipkin which stood beside it.

Swallowing the strong liquor which he had poured

out at a draught, he wiped his mouth on his sleeve, and then crossed the room to where Boone was lying.

He stood still for perhaps the space of a minute watching him. Not a quiver in the hunter's countenance betokened wakefulness. Apparently satisfied, the man returned to his position by the fire, and having thrown a fresh log on it, proceeded to bestow himself comfortably. In a few moments both he and his companion were sound asleep.

Excepting the heavy breathing of the sleepers in both rooms, there was nothing now to be heard to distract the attention of any one listening from the violence of the storm without.

This had become gradually more severe, and it seemed that there was now blowing a tornado; while the furious dash of the rain in heavy sheets of water against the sides and upon the roof of the cabin, produced a confusion of noise.

For several minutes the hunter continued to lie quietly. Then he suddenly lifted his head so that his face was turned toward the side of the cabin nearest him. A moment after he raised himself cautiously on one elbow, and appeared in the act of listening.

To listen with the hope of hearing anything except the raging of the tempest would seem to be futile, yet to the long-accustomed, though of late unpracticed ear of the hunter, there seemed to be something stirring outside the cabin which was not the wind nor the rain.

The heavy limbs of the trees in the forest about creaked and groaned, but it was not that. Occasion-

ally a boulder or fragment of rock, dislodged from its fastness at the summit of the hill, dashed heavily through the woods with a fierce crash, and rolled down into the valley below—but it was not that.

Close to his listening ear could be heard a grating sound, and so acute was the hearing of the hunter, that in a moment he had discovered nearly the exact point whence the sound appeared to emanate.

The cabin being built in an exposed position, had been carefully constructed for protection from the elements. The seams between the logs had been caulked with clay, which had hardened like stone. The roof was double, similarly protected, and the whole structure was impervious to water.

The sound which had aroused Boone from his pretended sleep grew perceptibly louder, although it could not have been heard by any ordinary ear at a distance of three feet.

The deduction was inevitable ; the cause was coming nearer.

In another moment, by the brilliant light of the newly-replenished fire, the quick eye of the hunter perceived a portion of the hardened clay between the logs next to him apparently cracking.

He made no movement, but watched.

Then the crack opened wider, and the point of a steel instrument could be seen evidently being pushed toward him, though it was speedily withdrawn.

The scene was becoming an interesting one. The hunter had gradually turned over on his knees, and

was now resting on his two hands, his head extended, and his glistening eyes fixed on the crack opened between the logs.

It was certain to his mind that this must be the work of friends, and that something more was to follow.

Something did follow.

A twisted piece of paper was thrust through the opening. Looking quickly toward his sleeping guards Boone seized it and opened it eagerly.

The hunter, though illy educated, and to a considerable degree illiterate, could read plain writing, which fortunately happened to be the nature of the present missive.

Its contents were as follows :

"Use this as speedily as possible and wait events. Do what you can to help us. It may be your last chance.

" FRIENDS."

Even as he completed reading this brief note, which he at once bestowed about his person, something else was passed through the crack.

Still watching the two men by the fire, Boone grasped it with one hand and pulled it through. It proved to be a strong file.

The storm, so far from lessening, seemed to increase in violence, and the noise was deafening. Under its cover Boone began at once to file the link of his chain which attached it to the belt.

The tool was perfectly adapted for the quickest work

of this nature, and a very few minutes made an impression on the iron. In fact, in less than a quarter of an hour the hunter had filed through the link and was freed from the chain.

Properly supposing that his movements were watched from without, through the crack, he now passed the file through, thus signifying that his part of the work was completed. The instrument was seized on the other side and drawn without.

Just at this moment a movement on the part of the elder of the two guards, made Boone drop quickly into his previous position, and appear to be still deep in sleep. The one who moved turned restlessly about for an instant and then rose to a sitting posture and looked steadily toward the prostrate form of the hunter. He appeared satisfied, and with a glance at his companion to see that he was sleeping, he returned to his former position.

The windows in the cabin, to which we have alluded, were square openings about eighteen inches in diameter each way, two in number, and placed immediately under the projecting eaves, where they were completely protected from any possibility of rain coming into the room. One of these openings was closed by a shutter, the other was open.

Boone's attention was presently directed toward the open window by a slight scratching sound, which seemed to come from that direction.

His two guards were now evidently fast asleep, and he had no hesitation in raising himself to a posture

which would facilitate instant movement on his part if it should become necessary.

Already he was engaged in forming his own plan of operations, which must, however, of course, depend materially on the course pursued by his friends without.

The nature of the first step on their part was now made obvious. The head of a man appeared at the opening, and a quick glance was thrown by him about the room to gain a correct idea of the situation. The head was, of course, in the shadow, and Boone could not discern the features.

Now a hand appeared through the opening and beckoned Boone to approach. Satisfied that it was safe for him to move, he arose to his feet and crossed the room, noiselessly, until he stood beneath the window. Then a voice said :

“Can you open the door?”

Boone shook his head and pointed to the stout man by the fire who had the key in his pocket.

But at this juncture the latter moved, and before Boone could return to his place, he had opened his eyes and saw the situation. But even as he gathered his muscles together to spring to his feet the hunter quicker than the thought which impelled him, threw himself upon him and clutched him by the throat.

There was a momentary struggle—silent, though deadly. Then the stout man’s head fell back on his shoulders, his face became purple, and he lay insensible on the floor.

To turn him on his side and snatch the key from his

pocket was the work of an instant. Another brought the hunter to the door and the key in the lock. It was turned quickly. The bolt shot—but before Boone could lift the latch which still held the door, the younger man, startled by the noise of the key, had awakened and was on his feet.

Quick as lightning, he seized his rifle and brought it to his shoulder. The hunter saw there was no time to open the door, and sprang to one side as the piece exploded.

In another moment he had thrown himself upon the man and dashed him to the floor. Before he could recover himself, Boone snatched the remaining rifle from its place against the wall—and not a moment too soon—for, aroused by the explosion, amid a confusion of shouts and noise, the whole body of men in the back room poured through the door—but stood for a single instant aghast as they saw the figure of the now thoroughly aroused hunter standing with the rifle in his hand.

The pause was momentary, however, for the first one drew his pistol from his belt and fired. There was no time for aim, and the bullet went wide of the mark.

At that instant the door was burst open, and Harry Calvert and Hardeman, both armed with rifles, sprang over the threshold; behind them could be seen the figure of Rafe Slaughter, swinging in his right hand a long-handled axe, which he had taken from the wood-pile outside; while Mike Dooley brought up the rear armed with a horse-pistol.

The other party had returned to the room where they had been sleeping and got their rifles, and one of them, a powerful man, was in the act of covering Harry Calvert, when a shot from Boone's rifle brought him to the floor.

The others fired now in quick succession, and Harde-man had time only to deliver his shot when he fell to the floor slightly wounded.

The young man who had been thrown by Boone had recovered his feet and taken one of the pistols from the belt of his companion, and the disabling of one of their number left Calvert's party, with Boone, to encounter seven men well armed and determined.

The situation would have seemed hopeless, but at this juncture Rafe Slaughter, thrusting the others aside, dashed into the midst of the opposing party with his axe, striking wildly to right and left, his long arms and powerful muscles enabling him to wield the terrible weapon with the strength of a giant.

First one fell and then another, while Harry and Mike emptied their pieces into two more.

The struggle was now more equal.

The cabin was so filled with smoke that one could hardly separate friend from enemy; but Boone, rushing to the assistance of Rafe, with his rifle clubbed, dealt blows hither and thither, and as the others followed his example, in a few moments the entire party of Boone's captors were *hors de combat*.

An examination of the field after the victors had taken breath, showed Thomas Hardeman wounded by a

ball which had ploughed through his scalp and stunned him ; and on the other side, two shot dead, one with a bullet through his lungs, and evidently hopelessly wounded ; and the one whom Boone had first attacked and strangled also dead. The remaining four, two of whom were insensible, had been badly beaten about the head and face with Rafe's axe and the clubbed rifles.

A hunt was at once made for ropes, and those who were injured were securely tied.

Next a hurried consultation was held, and it was determined to wait till daybreak, and then set forth toward Squire O'Brien's, which lay about a hundred miles, as near as they could guess, to the north-east of where they then were.

Leaving Mike to watch, the others lay down by the fire to take needed rest after their arduous efforts and the excitement of the fight.

Very few words of explanation passed between them, and all except the hunter were soon wrapped in deep slumber.

He, quite unable to sleep, and not needing repose, reclined, thinking over the occurrences of the night, and taking upon himself the attitude of watcher, for Mike's eyes soon grew heavy, and his usefulness in that capacity became more apparent than real.

The hours that passed before daybreak, witnessed a lull in the storm, and when the hunter aroused his companions, the weather was beginning to clear, though it still rained. It took but little time to make all prepa-

rations for the start, the horses of Calvert's party being found where they had been tied to trees under the lee of a projecting rock a short distance from the cabin.

All mounted, Boone riding double with the Irishman, who had the strongest and heaviest steed. Nothing could be found of the horses belonging to their recent antagonists, and there was not time for an extended search.

The party then set forth on their journey.

CHAPTER IX.

Christmas Eve and a Christmas present. With some reflections on the philosophy of the tender passion, and illustrations from the characters of this story. Concluding with a catastrophe, and the downfall of "great expectations."

THE Christmas holidays opened gloomily at Mount Mourne. This day, so important as a festival among our ancestors, equally in the Colonies with the old country, promised in the present instance, and among those in whom our interest now lies, to be but little like its predecessors.

At Mount Mourne it had always been customary to sustain the festivities at this season with great liberality and hospitality. The negroes looked forward to it almost from one year to another. Gifts were made in all directions, the great house was illuminated, the farm hands were treated to a banquet, at which venison, buffalo meat, and wild turkeys were served without limit, while home-brewed ale, after the old country fashion, was distributed with equal freedom.

Of course, none of the ordinary details of hospitality could be neglected ; no matter with what heavy hearts the hosts might set about it, and heavy indeed their hearts were. The two young men, from whom nothing had been heard for many weeks, were favorites wher

ever they were known, and their loss was specially felt in the mansion at this season.

Excepting the banquet and the distribution of gifts, to which we have alluded, it was determined that no festivities should be held, and, contrary to custom, no guests had been invited save those already known to us.

Maude had occupied her time, with such assistance as she could obtain from Mlle. Raimonde, aided by the negro girls attached to the household, in decking the principal apartments with evergreens, and in this employment she found a simple but agreeable distraction from her dreary thoughts.

To her, Harry's prolonged absence, without explanation, was especially painful.

She was forced to be divided between two opinions, either of which was sufficiently unpleasant: One, that he had met with some accident or disaster which prevented him from communicating with her; the other, that she had passed out of his mind to that degree that he did not care to afford her any information as to his whereabouts.

It is a peculiarity of a certain quality of the human mind in such circumstances, to attribute the worst and the most unlikely motive.

To one who loves, there would seem to be a painful pleasure in doubting the absent loved one. This is one of those psychological disturbances that are not easily accounted for by the ordinary regulations which govern mental impressions. An explanation may possi-

bly be found in the fact that in the exalted condition occasioned by the passion of love, every temperamental peculiarity becomes sublimated ; not even that of suspicion being exempt from the change. Meanwhile, the test of experience goes to show that the abnormal increase, or elevation of a dominant passion, is always to be viewed with doubt, since it generally exaggerates.

Poor Maude, however, did not analyze either her sentiments or their motives, and was greatly inclined to view the silence of her lover as an evidence of laxity on his part, to say the least, and to consider his shortcoming with a not unnatural severity in consequence.

The day of Christmas Eve had arrived, and all preparations for the holiday were completed. It was late in the afternoon, and a dull drizzling rain not only made the day itself specially disagreeable, but foreboded as unpleasant a condition for the one to follow.

Maude was tired, and her mind distracted. In this state her thoughts naturally returned to the subject which had so much occupied them, but which during the time of her labors had been laid aside.

Feeling unequal to conversation, she left the others of the family party, and proceeded to the piazza in front of the house, almost mechanically, and standing just without the door was gazing down the driveway to the road and to the bridge where we first introduced her.

Her mind returned to that occasion, and she reflected upon the happiness which she had felt during her prolonged excursion with her then undeclared lover

among the entrancing scenes of nature through which their horses' feet had led them.

While thus engaged in reflection, which, under the changed aspect of the scene, could not but be dreary and uncomfortable, her eyes caught sight of moving objects in the distance beyond the bridge.

She soon saw that it was a mounted party of several persons, and her first thought was that some uninited guests had taken advantage of the recognized hospitality of the Squire, and had come to pay them a Christmas visit unasked.

Disturbed by this conviction, she was about entering the house to withdraw herself from immediate contact with the new-comers, when something in the appearance of the approaching travelers made her pause.

A moment later, and her heart seemed to rise in her throat, while her cheeks flushed and her brows throbbed as, despite his changed appearance, she recognized in the leader of the approaching party, the form of Harry Calvert.

The girl stood with her hands clasped before her, gazing through the rain, with her whole soul impressed and her heart bounding under the influence of the sudden and unexpected reaction.

One by one the figures became distinct before her—Thomas Hardeman, the secretary, and last of all the heavy black horse with Mike in front and the tall figure of one unknown to her riding behind him.

The revulsion of feeling in Maude was complete; and without stopping to reflect upon the storm, she

hurriedly flew down the steps of the piazza, and straight along the drive to meet them.

Harry had espied her, and as she approached, sprang from his horse, which he left to find its own way whither it might choose, while he met the girl and clasped her in his arms without hesitation, as though she indeed already belonged to him.

The others came quickly up, and Maude, to recover herself from her confusion, as she extricated herself from Harry's embrace, went from one to another, and clasped their hands, while she warmly welcomed and congratulated them on their safe return.

Mike was as cordially received as any of them, but she hesitated as she looked up into the sallow face of the stranger.

"You should welcome him, Maude," said Harry, "for this is Daniel Boone, the innocent cause of all our troubles, and of my long and deeply regretted absence."

Maude hesitated no longer, but held up her little hand, which was bashfully seized by the pioneer.

The face of the man inspired confidence and awakened friendship, and with a few gentle words which implied recognition of his hardships and appreciation of his good qualities at once, Maude fled back to the house, for the first time perceiving that she was drenched with rain and not altogether presentable to the seniors of the family, who were pretty certain to presently make their appearance.

In fact, before she could reach the piazza, they were all there.

The wanderers had been seen by some of the negroes about the place, and word had been carried instantly to the heads of the family.

Maude did not escape a severe glance from Lady O'Brien, as she flew up the steps, panting, and hastened to her apartment to change her dress; but this disturbed her little, and a moment later all were engaged in welcoming the unexpected arrivals.

These certainly presented a motley appearance.

With clothing torn and weather-stained, with faces bronzed by exposure to the elements, and unshaven for many months, with their hair unkempt and uncared for and straggling over their shoulders, their looks displayed clearly the nature of the hardships they had endured.

Gladly alighting from their tired steeds, long unused to a hearty meal of their customary food, and to the care always bestowed upon them, our friends were ushered within the dwelling, whose Christmas decorations now seemed to have gained a new freshness and even a new meaning under the changed aspect of affairs.

As they stood in the hall, they perceived that in their present state they would be out of place in the drawing-room; and Harry, turning to the Squire, said:

"Uncle, let me present to you Daniel Boone, to accomplish whose rescue this expedition was undertaken, and whose presence among us attests our success. I wish to say, that since we have known him our gratification has increased that we attempted and effected his escape. He is worthy of all our trouble and more."

While this little speech was being made with such emphasis as showed the speaker meant every word of it, Boone stood with his hands by his side and his eyes dropped, waiting anxiously for it to be concluded. When Harry had finished, Squire O'Brien extended his hand, and with the dignified manner which he could easily assume, and which sat well upon him, offered his congratulations and welcomed the hunter to his house.

"Make your stay with us as long as you can, Mr. Boone. We shall be sorry to have you go."

"I thank you, sir, very heartily, for your kind reception. It adds a debt to the one I owe these gentlemen who have done so much for me, and I shall never die happy till I have paid off some of it."

Lady O'Brien joined her husband in a kind and graceful welcome to the hunter, who was then introduced to Dr. Bullock, Mr. and Mme. Rawlings and Mlle. Raimonde.

Boone was a little distracted by meeting so many of the gentry at once, but, on the whole, kept his customary equanimity pretty well.

Mike, in the meantime, had been seized by the other servants and hurried around to their quarters, where we may well leave him to their kindly attentions, while he sets forth in his own glowing vernacular to a crowd of open-mouthed and excited listeners the story of their perils and their success.

The first greetings being over, Harry, Thomas Harde man, and Rafe retired to the apartments assigned them

to make so much of a toilet as was practicable under the circumstances.

The Squire, himself, conducted Boone to a room, where he left him, to go and search among his own clothing for something that would temporarily answer his necessities.

Harry had not been half satisfied with the hasty embrace which he had obtained from the girl he loved, and as he sought his room looked in all directions for her that he might perchance renew it.

In this he was, as is not uncommonly the case in such instances, assisted by the maiden herself. She had changed her attire with unequaled alacrity, hoping or just such an opportunity, and as her lover wended his way through the long upper hall with as much noise as he could accomplish, the door of her room opened and she made her appearance.

Her hair was still wet with the rain and her cheeks flushed with her recollections. Her eyes glistened, and all her appearance showed to Harry that there was no change in her, unless, if possible, to his advantage.

Seizing her by both hands, he impressed a kiss upon her willing lips, and for a moment neither of them spoke.

Of course, Harry's first speech was that idiotic one which has probably formed the preliminary of similar conversations from the time of Adam and Eve down.

"Did you miss me, darling?" observed the youth, with such perfect innocence in his countenance as

would deceive the elect into the supposition that he was in doubt as to her reply.

While a woman always expects and desires this question, she is always tempted to say "No." Maude resisted the temptation, and supplied in its stead the stereotyped answer :

" You know I did ! "

As there was really no doubt in Harry's mind that he did know it, he did not seek to pursue the argument further except after the customary silent, but eloquent fashion.

Maude's face disappeared on his shoulder, and would have probably remained there for some considerable while, but at that moment voices were heard.

The girl escaped and fled to her room, while Harry walked unconcernedly whistling down the hall.

Half an hour found the entire party congregated in the drawing-room, where the story of the pursuit of Boone's captors and his rescue at the log-cabin on the hill-side was told graphically, each of the rescuers taking his share in the narration.

That our readers may be as well informed as the auditors on this occasion, what has not been already here written may be recounted briefly, as follows.

The cave which had been described by Mike's *protégé*, had been readily found, but when found was unoccupied. The tracks, however, were fresh, and being closely followed by Harry and his associates, Boone's abductors had been traced some twenty miles, when the clew had failed,

From this point, the history of the expedition was one of slow progress, under every possible disadvantage of inexperience on the one side, pitted against a thorough knowledge of woodcraft on the other.

The party had camped out, living upon what they could shoot, during nearly the whole of the summer and early fall, only relieved from this kind of life by occasionally finding an outlying farm or frontier settlement.

From one or another of these localities they occasionally gained a little information which assisted them in their search, but the final success resulted from their having come upon the trail of the party which had reached the log hut on the afternoon before the capture.

Following these men at a safe distance Boone's friends had tracked them to the house itself, and had hovered about the place until darkness had made a movement practicable.

This was briefly the story told at Mount Mourne, interrupted constantly by questions and observations from the interested listeners.

When the narrative was concluded, the Squire requested the presence of his nephew, with Boone and the secretary, in his library, whither they accordingly proceeded, and being seated, Rafe Slaughter remarked that the time had now come for him to explain the nature of Judge Anderson's designs, in which Boone was to become important as an instrument in conducting them to a successful conclusion.

Observing, that what he was about to say was set forth in papers in his charge, and which could be pro-

duced if necessary, to substantiate it, he proceeded in the following language :

“ The matter in question is, as you will at once perceive, of grave importance, and it is perhaps unnecessary for me to say that my communication is to be kept in strict confidence.”

The others bowed, and Rafe continued :

“ My patron, Judge Anderson, having been thoroughly informed by his correspondents in England concerning the prospects for emigration to the Colonies, has devised a scheme for the purchase of enormous tracts of land beyond our present frontier.

“ Having associated with him a number of gentlemen, like himself the possessors of large means, he designs to organize a country and a government ; but with no intent to defraud the natives, and especially desiring to avoid any bitterness of feeling on the part of tribes at present at peace with the Colonists, he purposes calling the chiefs together at some point and time to be hereafter designated, and to establish with them a treaty, and obtain by amicable and honest means the land which he desires.

“ Unacquainted as he is with the nature of the country, it is essential that some well-qualified person should, in the first instance, proceed in that direction and obtain the requisite knowledge regarding it.

“ For this purpose, he has selected our friend Boone, who, at a meeting with the Judge last March, consented to act in the capacity of pioneer, but without being fully informed as to the direction in

which he was to go, or the nature of the objects he was to subserve.

“I am authorized to make all the necessary arrangements for forwarding the enterprise at the earliest practicable moment ; and have among the papers in my possession general directions as to the route to be followed, so far as it is possible to lay it down in the beginning.

“At the point where our knowledge of the country ends, the most material part of Boone’s task commences ; and after that he is to be left untrammelled to his own resources.

“According to the arrangement which I have already related, Boone is to gather a party of five or six energetic and experienced frontiersmen to accompany him, but these are not to be made acquainted with Judge Anderson’s designs.

“My letter to you, sir,” he continued, addressing himself to Squire O’Brien, “gave you, I believe, an opportunity to become interested in this enterprise. I should be glad to know your conclusion with regard to it.”

The Squire rose, and walked the length of the room two or three times, musing, before he replied. Then he said :

“So far as my friend’s plan has been set forth—and what I hear now is about what he wrote me—I am in entire accord with it.

“I have given it much thought this summer, and have pretty well concluded to join the Judge and his friends in the investment. There are some details, however,

as to which I desire to be informed, and I shall withhold my final conclusion for the present; remarking, however, in a general way, that, so far as I can see, it will be favorable."

"The idea, as I understand it," said Harry, "is to buy up this large tract of land, and invite immigrants to go there and make settlements, giving them certain advantages as to cost, etc."

"Yes. That is it," said Rafe. "But there is more. I don't like to say that the scheme is exactly political, but I may observe that the Judge expects to form an organization which will, in some degree, have a political existence. You will understand that this is a rather ticklish subject to dwell upon, and the simplest way in which I can put it is, that the design includes the formation of a nationality, even the name of which has been concluded upon"—

"And that is?" said Harry.

"Transylvania."

"The Kingdom of Transylvania," observed Harry, thoughtfully.

"Ah!" said Rafe. "You have added to it. I did not say kingdom."

Harry looked surprised and the Squire serious. Boone had been a silent listener.

"But whether it is to be a kingdom, republic, or oligarchy," continued Rafe, airily, but with meaning, "is foreign to the question at present.

"Now, Boone, you have heard the statement and know about as much of the matter as I can tell you.

Are you still willing to fulfill your undertaking as you expressed it to Judge Anderson last March ? ”

Boone shifted a little in his seat, and then in his quiet way replied :

“ Whatever I undertake I go through with, if I can. If I understand it, the Judge wants me to go out into the open, and look about till I find the kind of country he wants, so as to be able to describe it to him, and give him some idee as to what kind of creatures there are in it.”

“ That is about it,” said Rafe.

“ Do you know, in a few words,” added Boone, “ about where he wants me to go in ? ”

“ Yes, I do. He expects you to start about Clinch River, and get through the mountains, and then strike north-west for a hundred miles or so. It is about there he means to begin to locate, as near as he knows, taking in territory south and east of that point.”

“ Well, I can tell him what he will meet up there,” said Boone, “ though I’ve never been so far ; but there’s buffalo all through the western plains, and Injuns the worst kind. Out among us frontiersmen that country is called the ‘ Dark and Bloody Ground,’ for they do say there’s been more fightin’ by the Injuns themselves right in there, an’ more bloodshed an’ more scalps lifted, than in four times the amount of territory anywhere else in North America.”

“ Then it is going to be dangerous work, I should judge,” said the Squire.

“ Well, it is going to be lively,” replied Boone. “ A

man's got to keep his mind about him when he's out there, pretty continually.

"But I am willing to undertake it, Mr. Slaughter, just as I said in the beginning; and I can find up around Yadkin about six, or five of just the men I want, and some of 'em have been pretty well out there already."

At this moment there was a tap at the door, and on the Squire calling, "Come in!" a servant appeared with a letter, which, on being examined, proved to be for Harry Calvert; one, in fact, which had been forwarded from Baltimore during his absence in the woods.

The young man excused himself, and opened it. In a moment, by the expression of his countenance, it could be seen that the news conveyed was important and not altogether agreeable.

"What is the matter, Harry, my boy?" cried the Squire.

Harry folded the letter and placed it in his pocket, then he said:

"My Uncle Fred is dead!"

As he made this observation Rafe started a little, but the movement was not noticed by the others, who were intently watching Harry.

"Well, my boy," said the Squire, "I am sorry he is dead for his own sake, if he was desirous of living, though he has had a good long life of it; but I hope we may congratulate you on an improvement in your fortunes."

"That is precisely what you will not be able to do,

Uncle," said Harry, in a low voice, and looking down, 'My letter tells me that he has bequeathed his entire private fortune, including the homestead, and, indeed, all his estates, to one Gabriel Herron, who is, I believe, a cousin of mine, the son of Uncle Fred's sister.'

As he said these words Rafe rose from his chair and, crossing the room hurriedly, appeared interested in looking at something through the window. The others looked after him for a moment, but surmised that he had made the movement out of delicacy concerning what he would recognize as a purely family matter.

The Squire was quite stunned with this information, and for a moment could think of nothing to say.

He perfectly well knew of Harry's aspirations, which he personally favored ; but he knew also that this breakdown of all the young man's hopes would be a death blow to his chances of marrying his cousin Maude.

Lady O'Brien, he was certain, would now be determined against a conclusion which she had always looked upon with disfavor ; and whatever might be his predilections, the Squire was too easy-going a man to even think of opposing his wife in a matter which concerned her more nearly than it did himself.

With a sigh, as he thought of the sad hearts that would result from this unforeseen situation, he braced himself up to the immediate emergency. A little more coolly than was his wont, he said :

"Well, Harry, I am sorry, of course, and you know anything that I can do for you"——

"Oh, yes!" said Harry, rising. "I know perfectly well you will be very sorry, but there's nothing to be done for me but what I shall do myself. Thanking you all the same for the offer. Boone," he said, suddenly, "whenever you are ready, I wish to join your expedition into the wilderness. There's nothing left for me in the settlements."

Rafe had turned from his position in the window and seemed about to say something, but, on consideration, changed his mind.

The hunter held out his hand to Harry, and said :

"I am sorry if you are disappointed, which, as I understand it, you are, about getting your Uncle's property ; but never mind, you are a young man, and if you go out with me I am sure the Judge, who is generous, will see that you sha'n't suffer."

Rafe came forward at this, and said, emphatically :

"You are right there, Boone. I can answer for the Judge that if Mr. Calvert joins in his enterprise, he will be taken care of."

"I suspect," said the Squire, "it's about the best thing you can do, my boy. If I go into this affair my interests shall certainly be exerted in your favor."

Harry bowed, but the poor fellow was quite crest-fallen, and now made a movement to leave the room.

"There is nothing more to be said," added the Squire. "You all understand that what has been mentioned here is to be kept quite secret, excepting as to the general fact that Boone is to head an expedition into the wilderness to examine the country."

"That is it exactly," said Rafe, and upon this a general movement was made to the door.

While the Squire went off to inform his wife as to the turn of affairs, and Rafe drew Boone out toward the piazza, where he held him in conversation, Harry retired in the direction of his room. At the head of the stairs he met Maude, and at once the young man's pent-up feelings overcame him.

With every appearance of anguish in his countenance he grasped her hand, and while the girl stood wondering what could have happened, he said :

"My dear Maude, a terrible calamity has come upon me, which threatens to destroy all my peace of mind and our promised happiness."

"Harry ! dear Harry ! What do you mean ? What has occurred ?"

"My Uncle in Ireland is dead, and has left his fortune to my Cousin Gabriel Herron."

Maude knew as well as any one how much depended, with regard to Harry's and her own future, upon this act. For a moment she was overcome ; but then the natural courage of the girl came to her, and lifting her head, she cried :

"Harry, it shall make no difference. I have given my promise and there is my hand on it. I will not retract, nor will I be prevented from doing what it is right I should do. I am yours, promised and sworn, and you can have me when you wish me."

Harry broke down at this completely, and for a moment was unable to control himself sufficiently to respond

to the noble conduct of the girl he loved. He could only grasp her proffered hand and draw her to his heart. After a moment, he said :

“My darling, if I hold you to your promise, and I don’t say that I shall, it shall not be to your injury Trust me !”

“You *must* hold me to my promise,” she said, looking up. “For you would not make me out an untruthful girl, for the mere purpose of sustaining an unwholesome pride. I say again, I will be your wife whenever you wish it.”

“Maude !” said a stern voice, and turning, the lovers saw Lady O’Brien, who had approached without their hearing.

“Go to your room, girl ! I am ashamed to hear you express such a determination in such language ; and as for you, Harry Calvert”——

“Mother, you shall not insult him. He is my promised husband. I would not willingly be disrespectful to you, but you must not urge me too far.”

“Go to your room, Miss !” cried Lady O’Brien, white with passion.

Harry released the girl, whispering :

“Go, Maude. This will all right itself in time, and now that I know how you feel, nothing that is said can trouble me. Go, dear !”

With this request Maude complied, and retired to her room.

Lady O’Brien remained, and made as if she would speak to her nephew further ; but he, with a low bow

passed her where she stood, and proceeded to his own room.

Hesitating for a moment, surprised at the firm attitude of her daughter and nephew, her Ladyship, presently, with a toss of her head, proceeded down the stairs, and joined her guests in the drawing-room; where already the downfall of poor Harry's prospects was being thoroughly canvassed.

CHAPTER X.

Harry Calvert comes to a determination, and the Christmas festivities at Mount Mourne to an abrupt conclusion. A family disturbance and a sudden severing of family ties.

As though by a general understanding, the subject of Harry's misfortune was not discussed during Christmas-day, which was devoted, as usual, to the enjoyments customary on that occasion throughout the southern Colonies.

The news of the return of Squire O'Brien's friends had spread among the few neighboring planters, and some of these, with their families, rode over to Mount Mourne to congratulate the family.

All day a great bowl of egg-nog stood on the drawing-room table, and was visited frequently by the guests, who became sufficiently hilarious to make the occasion enjoyable.

During the day, the negro hands were called up to the great house, and the gifts which had been provided for them were distributed. These comprised blankets, shoes, bandanna handkerchiefs, sides of bacon and hams, tea, tobacco, and such articles of clothing as were appropriate to their condition and to the season. To these were added, in certain instances, by Lady O'Brien and Maude, gifts of ribbons and fancy articles to the young girls, and toys to the children.

At night a pleasant party assembled in the drawing-room, where immense wood fires roared up the chimneys and gave an air of homelike hospitality, which could hardly have otherwise been so perfectly assumed. Wine and punch were in requisition, and with these and other refreshments the assembled guests made themselves happy and contented.

On the following morning a reaction had taken place, and when all met at breakfast, there could not but be noticeable a gloomy aspect which seemed to indicate the feelings of those present. There was but little conversation; but, as the Squire rose from the table, he requested Harry's presence in the library, whither he was at once followed by the young man.

The Squire had in the meantime been thoroughly instructed by his wife, and the customary geniality of his nature was not apparent as he motioned Harry to a seat, and closing the door, took one himself.

His very manner of opening the conversation was little calculated to reassure the young man, but rather tended to stimulate in him those sentiments of opposition which had already been awakened.

"Now, Harry, my boy, I am going to speak frankly to you," said the Squire. "Lady O'Brien has informed me of an interview between you and Maude, which she accidentally interrupted, the day before yesterday, and I am bound to say, my dear fellow, that I hardly think you have commenced by treating us exactly fairly under the circumstances."

Harry flushed at this charge. "But, sir—" he began.

The Squire held up one hand.

"Don't interrupt me, please. Perhaps I put it a little too strongly. Of course, I don't mean to accuse you of any intentional deviation from a course which would be correct, and much should be excused, I am aware, on account of the excitement of your arrival, and that, also, which would naturally result from the bad news you had heard ; and I don't mean to exonerate Maude either—in fact, my Lady was, if anything, inclined to be more severe with her than with yourself."

"Uncle," interrupted Harry, "you must know that I can not consent to retreating from anything that I have done, under cover of an accusation against Maude."

"No No! I perfectly understand that," and the Squire again waved his hand as though to deprecate interruption. "All I mean, is, that both of you should have been more on your guard and under self-control than to have permitted yourselves a license which, under the changed conditions, was, to say the least, out of place."

"You must really excuse me," Harry burst forth, and at the same time he rose to his feet and began to pace the room with pardonable impetuosity.

"I do not see this in the light that Lady O'Brien and yourself evidently do, and my cousin Maude is of my way of thinking. Now, I have no intention of being clandestine in any way, nor has she. But, Uncle Hugh, we have talked this matter over a little, and though at first I was honestly willing to give Maude

up, she, like the dear faithful girl that she is, would not listen to it for a moment. Under these circumstances, you must see that I can not permit my fidelity to be less than hers, nor my motives to be misconstrued."

"I see nothing of the kind, sir," said the Squire. Opposition always irritated him, and in this case he felt specially grieved, since his heart was with the young couple, while his head strenuously forbade his listening to its dictates.

"I can only see foolish obstinacy on her part and wrong-headedness on yours."

"Sir!"

"Don't interrupt me! I will not be interrupted. What I was going to say before was this: Neither Lady O'Brien nor myself will consent to any agreement whatsoever between Maude and you, looking toward marriage in the future.

"The idea has always been obnoxious to her Ladyship; and certainly under the present state of things, I could not myself view it agreeably to your wishes. I feel very sorry; deeply pained to be obliged to place myself in opposition to you; but in this instance there can be no other conclusion."

Here he paused to take breath, and Harry at once took up the subject.

"What you say is very unpleasant and very disagreeably put, but I do not mean to find fault with it on that account. Lady O'Brien has always been unfriendly to me, and I am not surprised at her action in the matter; but you, who have always treated me like a father

I confess do surprise me by the manner in which you adopt her views."

"My dear boy!" cried the Squire, "I have the same fatherly interest in you I always had. Do not mistake in me, what is my simple duty, and a very disagreeable one, for a desire to conflict with your happiness, not to speak of that of my only daughter. Indeed, I may say, that I have your interests both at heart, and I should be willing to modify what would be my wife's view with regard to the matter to this extent."

Harry listened courteously, but evidently without much hope.

"The best thing for you to do," continued the Squire, "and of course I don't mean to be discourteous or inhospitable; but the best thing for you to do would be to leave here at the first moment that is agreeable to yourself, and return to your plantation; there or elsewhere, to endeavor to build up your fortune.

"In fact, it is a great pity that you ever had the cause, which I admit you have had, for neglecting your own advancement. It is always a bad thing for a young man to have expectations, and there never was better evidence of this fact than is furnished by yourself.

"And I was going to add, that if you settle down to a planter's life, or to any other which shall prove advantageous, and if you should be successful and acquire such a competence as would justify me, I would not continue to be adverse to your union with my daughter."

"Do you suppose," cried Harry, "that I can go back to Baltimore among my associates, to be pitied by them as a discarded heir?"

"Hem! The situation does not present itself agreeably, at first glance, I admit; but what plan have you to suggest that will offer any improvement on it?"

"This, Uncle. I have been reflecting carefully ever since learning of my changed condition, and I have come to this decision, in carrying out which I hope to have your aid.

"Nothing can induce me to return to Maryland for anything more than the briefest possible visit to settle up my affairs. That I shall have to do, but I shall make the journey subservient to my other purposes."

"And those are?" said the Squire.

"What I have already intimated: to join Daniel Boone in his expedition beyond the mountains.

"You have told me you would give me your influence with your friend Judge Anderson, and in a new country, and with land sufficient in quantity to make a planter's life something of an object, I can hope to advance, and in a few years occupy a respectable position."

"Well, I see no objection to that plan," said the Squire. Indeed it had already occurred to him that it was the very best way of settling all the difficulties. Harry and Maude would thus be separated, and possibly the whole affair might blow over. Thus thinking, he continued:

"I will help you with Dick Anderson, and he is certain to give you a patent of as much land as you may

desire, and of your own selection. Very good idea, my boy, very good indeed !”

“ But I had not concluded, Uncle Hugh,” said Harry, as the Squire, rising to his feet, seemed to signify that the interview was at an end. He seated himself, however, and resumed his attitude of listening, though with a dubious expression on his face, as if he feared the subject was not so happily arranged as he had anticipated.

“ Maude is quite of my mind as to this plan, but we have both come to the conclusion that before I carry it into effect we ought to be married.”

“ The devil you have !” roared the Squire, and his face flushed with anger. “ Well, sir, this is a cool proposition, but you may be certain it will go no farther. I have still something to say, I think, with regard to the matrimonial alliance of my own daughter.”

Harry had fired his shot, and was as cool as the Squire was irritated. He now rose in earnest to terminate the interview, saying as he did so :

“ Well, Uncle Hugh, I have no wish to anger you. I did not invite this conversation, out of which, what I have said has naturally grown. Maude and I ”——

“ Don’t dare to put yourselves together in a sentence in that shape, young man. I won’t have it.”

“ Very well, Uncle. Then there is no more to be said.”

“ No, sir ! No more, certainly, from you. Whatever else is to be said as to this most audacious proposal will be said by Lady O’Brien to her daughter, in the way of

an injunction which I think Maude will hardly be inclined to disobey."

"We will leave that for herself to decide, Uncle Hugh," and with that Harry opened the door and left the room.

A moment later the Squire's bell was rung furiously, and on a servant appearing in answer to it, a message was sent to Miss O'Brien, that her father required her presence in the library at once.

Maude obeyed the summons without hesitation.

The interview was held with closed doors, and was a brief one. From the attitude and appearance of the young lady as she left the room less than ten minutes later, with her head high in the air, and her face pale, but showing every sign of resolution, it was evident that it had been a stormy one. She retired at once to her chamber, while the Squire sought that of his wife.

By this time the household had been made aware that something serious in the way of a domestic under-current was progressing.

Harry on leaving his Uncle had sought Daniel Boone, with whom he held a brief conference, when both went to their respective rooms, and Harry proceeded to pack up his belongings.

The few articles that Boone had carried in his saddlebags on the journey which had resulted so disastrously for him, had been captured with his horse by his kidnappers, but had been regained from them after the fight.

Harry had called young Hardeman to his room, and

was in earnest conversation with him, while at the same time engaged in his packing operations, when there was a tap at the door, and on being told to come in, a young negro girl, specially attached to Maude, entered on tip-toe, and gave Harry a little note.

Excusing himself to his friend, Harry retired to the window and read it.

"DEAR HARRY:

"I have had a terrible time with father, but I have not flinched. Be firm and don't desert me, and you can trust me throughout.

"Your MAUDE."

Harry could not resist the temptation to press the little wisp of a note to his lips, which action was seen by Hardeman, who only coughed slightly to signify his appreciation of the act.

Hurriedly scrawling a few words on a leaf torn from his note-book, Harry handed it to the girl, with the strict injunction to give it to her young mistress, and no one else ; at the same time enforcing this order with the gift of a half-crown.

"No one else sha'n't have it, massa, foh shuah. I's young missus' own gal, an' she ain't done got no nigger on the whole plantation that's so trusty like me."

"That's all right. I believe you. Hurry along and give her the note!"

The girl ran out of the room, and started to find Maude; but at the head of the stairs she met Lady O'Brien.

"Where are you going, Rose?" said my Lady.

"I's gwine to find Miss Maude, your Lad'ship."

At the same time the girl held the hand containing the note concealed behind her.

Lady O'Brien had all the true Irish cunning despite her high birth, and in the present condition of affairs it would not do to be too punctilious.

"Very well, go and find her. I think she is in her room," she said to the girl, who immediately started to run past her. But before she had quite reached Maude's chamber-door she felt a grasp of her wrist, and at the same moment the note was snatched from her hand; while the girl ran screaming down the stairs, partly from fear of the consequences that might ensue, and partly from the pain of a smart slap on the ear administered by Lady O'Brien.

The noise startled Harry within his room, and hurrying to the door, he opened it just in time to see Lady O'Brien reading the note which he had sent to his cousin.

With three strides he was at her side.

"Your Ladyship will please give me that note, which is mine, and which you have disgracefully purloined from my messenger."

"The note is addressed to my daughter, sir, and I have a perfect right to possess myself of it. It is, moreover, such a writing as you, if you possessed any gentlemanly instincts, could never have ventured to send to her."

"Madam, since you choose to resort to such under

handed methods of dealing with us, you need not be surprised at any course which we see fit to pursue."

By this time the brief altercation, which was in rather a loud tone, had been overheard by Maude herself, who was waiting in her room for a response to her message.

She now opened her door, and appeared in the hall, whereupon her Ladyship, disinclined to face both the lovers together, hurriedly left the scene.

It took but a few words to explain to Maude the nature of the transaction in which her mother had been prominent, and to communicate the contents of the note. These had been simply a tender message, designed to reassure the young girl, and satisfy her of the continued determination of her lover. Of course, it was not of a nature calculated to either reassure or satisfy the actual reader.

An incident of the character just related could not but increase the feeling of acerbity already existing, and it became evident to the parties concerned that some decisive action must be taken, and at once.

With the speed with which violent conditions often regulate themselves, the various parties to the present one came to their several determinations, and before the day was over the foundation of the acts which are to form the remainder of this narrative had been laid,—though without any one of the characters being aware of it,—and a complete revolution had taken place among the members of the family at Mount Mourne.

Maude was of age under the law, and free to go and come at her own will.

A brief colloquy between Harry and herself, at which Daniel Boone assisted, resulted in the following plan of operations :

Maude was to be escorted by Daniel Boone and Thomas Hardeman, with Mike Dooley acting as servant, to the residence of the farmer on the Yadkin.

Here she was to remain, while Harry and Rafe Slaughter traveled eastward; the latter to report to Judge Anderson all that had occurred since he had left him in March—and as to most of which the Judge was still in ignorance. Harry Calvert was to go on to Baltimore and dispose of his plantation.

On his way westward to meet Daniel Boone at his farm, Harry was to pick up Rafe Slaughter, when they would journey the rest of the way together. The time required for all of this travel and arrangement would take until well into the spring, when Boone expected to be ready with his own party for the expedition.

Suddenly thought out, this plan was no less promptly executed. Gathering together hurriedly such articles as were essential, to be packed on a led horse which belonged to young Hardeman, Maude prepared for her journey.

At the last moment she was so earnestly entreated by Rose, the girl whose accidental meeting with Lady O'Brien had brought affairs to a climax, that she determined to take her with her; she being, in fact, the actual property and slave of Maude, having been purchased by her when still a child. Mike was his own

master, and it was at his own suggestion that he formed one of the escort.

Mr. Hardeman's plantation lay on the road which the party would travel, and young Thomas rode thither in advance to make his own preparations

In the meantime, the condition of mind of Squire O'Brien and his Lady, not to say of their guests, the rector and Mr. and Mrs. Rawlings, could hardly be conceived.

The latter found themselves most certainly *de trop*; and despite the urgent requests of the Squire and his Lady, were getting ready for a hurried departure homeward—the Rawlingses to the capital, and the rector to his own residence, a few miles away. At the last moment Mlle. Raimonde, who had somehow been out of sight and hearing during most of the trouble which had been brewing, was made aware of it, and at once announced her determination to accompany her young mistress. As this was gladly acceded to by Maude, it completed an exodus of the entire household, except the Squire, his Lady, and little boy.

It is certain that, seeing to what a pass their action had brought them, these two would gladly have reconciled matters, had not her Ladyship's pride intervened; but, indeed, everything had gone too far now for reconciliation, and when the sun set it was upon an empty house and a deserted couple.

The Squire and his Lady, with their young son, were left to contemplate the family ruin which had resulted

from their opposition ; which, had it been less strenuously manifested, or more delicately adjusted to the people and circumstances involved, might still have been successful ; while avoiding the present catastrophe, and the long line of exciting and even terrible occurrences which were to follow in its wake.

CHAPTER XI.

In which Stephen Roberts appears upon the scene for an instant, to the present horror of the Reader, and for the thickening of the mystery which begins to enfold the characters of this story.

WE must here turn the reader's attention backward for a little space, while we relate certain events which occurred a few days after the day when Boone and his friends started on their journey homeward from the old log-house.

On that morning, shortly after sunrise, a man on horseback might have been seen slowly picking his way over the still muddy road which led past the hill and the house in question.

This person has appeared already in the course of our narrative, and would have been recognized as the slim, pallid man with iron-gray hair who questioned one of the Regulators concerning Daniel Boone just before the riot at Hillsborough. It was, in fact, Stephen Roberts, the man who had so signally discomfited Harry Calvert during the interview held with him by the latter at his house, in regard to Boone's abduction.

A close inspection of his face, at the moment when we now introduce him, would have shown that he was a man who thought deeply, and who was at this time in a reflective mood.

The bridle hung loose on the horse's neck, as the animal now ambled and now walked, according as the condition of the road permitted, and at his own will otherwise. But, as he neared the house, Roberts raised his head, and, looking about him, apparently recognizing the locality, started the animal into a faster gait, which speedily brought him to a point where he turned off the road and ascended the hill.

In a few minutes the house came in view.

The door was wide open ; no smoke appeared issuing from the chimney, while the ground in front was trampled, as though by the feet of many persons and horses.

The unexpected appearance of the place gave Stephen Roberts a start ; and he hurried his horse until he had reached the door, when he sprang to the ground, leaving the animal to stand or wander, as he would.

The sight which met his astonished gaze as he stood on the threshold, was enough to turn his face several shades paler than was its wont, if that were possible.

The scene was unexpected, ghastly, terrible.

On the hearthstone, by the cold cinders and ashes, lay the body of a man, bloated out of shape, and the face blackened and distorted beyond recognition.

Near him, lying upon his face, was the body of a younger man, also dead.

At the other side of the room a number of bodies, seemingly also those of dead men, were lying in different attitudes, and so mingled together that it was difficult to separate them from each other at the first glance.

The whole aspect of the place was that of a charnel-house ; and Roberts stood transfixed with horror at the fearful sight ; but as he leaned forward, gazing at the tangled mass of seemingly dead humanity, a live hand and arm was stretched out to him imploringly, as if for succor.

So strong had been the impression on his mind of there being nothing living here, that he started back, appalled with the reaction that occurred, when this arm and hand, as though from the grave, made its mute appeal to him.

But then a terrible voice, rendered husky and forbidding by anguish and privation, groaned forth the words :

“ Water ! Water ! For God’s sake ! ”

The spoken words brought him to himself, and being a man absolutely devoid of fear, though impressed and startled with the sight he was witnessing, Roberts stepped forward, and leaning over the one who had spoken, recognized him.

“ For God’s sake, Butler, is that you ? What has happened ? ”

“ Water ! Water ! ” was all the poor wretch could utter ; and, seeing his extremity, Roberts stirred about looking for what he wished, which he presently found in a bucket on the table where was still the jug of spirits.

Filling the pipkin, he carried it to the other, who seized it in his hand and drained it instantly. While he was doing this Roberts perceived that he was tied with

ropes, from which he had managed to extricate the free arm, but without being able to loose himself further.

His thirst quenched, Butler regained his voice sufficiently to relate briefly what had occurred. Having concluded, and pointing over in the corner near him, he said :

“There’s Charlie Cleeves, who was alive at sunrise.”

Roberts went to the point indicated, where the man lay on his back, not presenting any more appearance of life, however, than was to be seen in the bodies about him. Placing his hand over his heart, Roberts perceived a faint beating ; whereupon he filled the pipkin with water, and dashed some in his face.

The man was not so far gone but that this revived him. He gasped, and after choking for a moment, came sufficiently to himself to be able to quench his thirst.

“Are there any more of you alive?” said Roberts, addressing Butler.

The other shook his head.

“No,” he said, “the last two died last night. The others were all killed during the fight. But untie me, for God’s sake, and let me out of this terrible hole.”

To his surprise, Roberts did not immediately proceed to act as he had requested. Instead of that, he raised his hand as if enjoining silence, and stepping to the door, passed over the threshold and outside.

The two men, who were watching him eagerly, exchanged glances as he disappeared and Butler said to the other ;

"What does he do that for?"

"Perhaps he heard something," replied the other.

But half satisfied, Butler began nervously to feel in his pocket, and for a moment the rustling of paper was heard. Then he resumed his attitude of listening, while he waited.

In the meantime a strange course of conduct, under the circumstances, was being pursued by Stephen Roberts.

On finding himself outside the house, his first act was to look for his horse, which he presently saw gnawing at the gray moss and stubble, among the trees a few paces away.

Stepping to the side of the animal his next movement was to extract from the holsters the two pistols which were in them.

He tried the loads, examined the priming carefully, and placing one in each pocket of his heavy riding-coat, returned to the door of the house, but not within sight of the two men who were there impatiently waiting for him.

He stood perfectly still, with his hands clasped before him and his head bent down, while he thought deeply.

The nature of his reverie must ever remain between him and his Maker. The result of it appeared in a few brief moments after it concluded.

Shaking himself together, and apparently by the movement divesting himself of some disagreeable or painful impression, he took a pistol in each hand and firmly walked into the cabin.

Instantly there was a report, quickly followed by another; the two being divided by a wild scream of mental and physical anguish.

Then there was silence; and as a cloud of smoke poured through the doorway Stephen Roberts walked steadily over the threshold, holding the two pistols in one hand while he closed the door with the other.

He mounted his horse; and with a face no less and no more pallid, and seemingly impressionless, he rode on down the hill at a slow pace until he had gained the road.

Then, as though pushed by such a remnant of a conscience as he possessed, or stung by such remorse as might be possible to such a character as his, he put spurs to his steed and dashed headlong through the woods.

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Months afterward, when the trees in the surrounding forest were green, and the sun cast warm shadows upon the ground, and the birds twittered and the squirrels chattered in the boughs; a party of immigrants, fathers, mothers, and children, passing through the woods in search of the land whereon they were to settle, came upon the old log-house on the hill-side.

Here they concluded to encamp, and take their noon day meal; and having alighted from the great wagon which contained their household goods and from the horses which some of the elder of the party rode beside it, one of their number, a bright lad of a dozen years

of age or so, ran laughing up to the door of the lonely house.

Pushing that in he stumbled over the threshold.

A wild shriek of terror called the others to his side when to all of them, as they clustered about the entrance and gazed shudderingly within, there appeared a ghastly mass of rigid skeletons, in the midst of which one, in a sitting posture, with head erect, pointed at them with outstretched fleshless arm and hand—whose extended finger of bone seemed to indicate that somewhere in the East, still unscourged of justice, might live, awaiting his punishment, the man who murdered his fettered and wounded comrades, that the secrets between them might still lie hidden.

Looking upon this sight only long enough to imprint upon their memories forever its every fearful characteristic, the party hurried from the scene.

Picking their steps, on tiptoe, over the grass, they hastened to resume occupation of their wagon, the horses attached to which had been loosened for their resting spell; and then, hurriedly whipping up their team, they fled with speed from the accursed spot.

These bearing the tidings to others whom they met, it gradually grew to be known about Hillsborough that the ghastly skeletons were those of the eight men whose disappearance early in the winter previous had mystified and alarmed their families and fellow-townsmen.

These men were none of them of good character and while their loss had awakened much surprise and

inquiry and some investigation, it had thus not been of a nature to cause much general grief.

A party being sent out to inspect the remains, and give them decent burial, the conclusions reached concerning their fate were found to be at variance one with another.

While some believed they had fought among themselves ; others scouted the idea, not unwisely, querying how they could have tied themselves up in the manner exhibited in the case of four of them.

Others thought that possibly some rambling band of Indians, from the southwest, might have happened upon the spot and massacred the whole of them.

But against this theory were set the facts that there was no sign of tomahawk or scalping-knife visible on any of the bodies. It was observed that the one found in a sitting posture, and another near to him, had large bullet-holes through their skulls.

The whole affair was so involved in mystery, that although such attempt on the part of the officers of justice as could be made to clear it up duly occurred, no result was reached.

The bodies were buried in the woods near where they were found, and the old house gradually fell in ruins, being ever after shunned by all who had heard the terrible tale connected with it.

Naturally, in the course of his official duties, a knowledge of this discovery came to the ears of Mr. Rawlings, of the Governor's Council ; but that high official did not probably conceive it essential to justice

to signify that he knew anything concerning the facts involved.

While the strange story remained a matter of public speculation, Stephen Roberts, as a prominent person of Hillsborough, and a man well acquainted with all the parties to this tragedy, was, of course, frequently appealed to ; but from his reticence and apparent ignorance upon the subject, nothing could be learned.

Meanwhile, those who had been prime actors in the beginning of the affair were many hundred miles away from its scene, and for years remained ignorant of what had happened after their own connection with the occurrence.

Fortunately for them, amid the sorrows and the horrors which many times encircled and disturbed their own wandering life, no knowledge of the miserable and cruel conclusion of the conflict in which they had taken part, ever came, to still farther inflict their memories.

CHAPTER XII.

Showing how the Regulators had occupied their time, and disclosing the result of Harry Calvert's visit to his Plantation. With some relation of a journey made to Judge Anderson, and what had happened there.

WHILE the incidents had been occurring which we have already recounted, a train of events of a serious character had attracted the attention of Eastern North Carolina.

During the latter months of the year 1768, the Regulators, doubtless impressed with their success at Hillsborough in the spring, had become more and more daring, and hardly a day or night passed that did not witness outrages on their part.

These consisted in attacks on individuals, or in barn or house-burning, as the case might be ; robbery coming in as a customary adjunct ; such being generally the case where large masses of the lower orders are united in antagonism to the laws and to the powers that be.

Of course, persons employed in official positions, and those whose duty it was to dispense the laws, were more immediately obnoxious to this class of agitators. Judge Anderson occupying such a position, and being peculiarly placed by reason of his connection with the Hills

borough riot, was specially an object of enmity and antipathy on the part of the Regulators.

To such an extent had these feelings on their part been carried, that when Rafe Slaughter and Harry Calvert reached Granville County and the vicinity of Anderson's estate, they soon discovered marked evidence of the destruction, which had even extended to this distance from the region more generally infested by the insurgents.

As they approached the mansion, and when the out-buildings should have come in sight, there was displayed before their eyes a scene of ruin, which, to one of them at least, could not but occasion the most poignant feelings of distress and regret.

Of such buildings there remained nothing but blackened embers.

Leaving the main road for the drive which led directly to the mansion, the whole scene of destruction lay before them.

The mansion itself was in ruins. This beautiful building, which was the pride of that part of the county in which it stood, had been fired by the mob, and destroyed with nearly all its contents; Judge Anderson and his family, however, escaping with such articles of value, important papers, etc., as they could hastily gather and bestow about their persons.

But as to this, Rafe and his new friend were uninformed until they had made inquiries among the neighbors; from them they learned that the Judge and his household were temporarily staying with a planter,

some ten miles further on ; and thither they immediately directed their steps, riding at such speed as they might, Rafe being necessarily anxious for the welfare of his patron and the family.

At the place designated, the house of a well-to-do planter, the whole family were found, and Rafe was gladly welcomed by all of them. Harry Calvert was also received courteously and hospitably, and at once made to feel quite at home.

The story of the ruin which had been occasioned by the depredations of the Regulators was one which, by this time, was familiar throughout the Colony.

In this instance, that there was not loss of life, as there had been in certain other cases, was due, perhaps, more than to anything else, to the fact, that the Judge, who had warm friends among every class of people, had been warned in time to enable him to vacate the premises before the attack had been actually made. He had thus been enabled to secure all his valuables, and all the records and documents belonging to his official position, and which were in his hands at the time.

After listening to the Judge's story, of course Rafe became the object of many questions, no tidings, except a single message, having been received from him since he left Granville in March.

The Judge had become acquainted with the fact of the capture of Daniel Boone ; beyond this he knew nothing ; and was, of course, deeply interested in the details of the expedition in which the two persons

before him had been engaged, and which had resulted in the attack on Boone's captors, and the release of the pioneer.

In passing through Hillsborough, Rafe and Harry had heard remarks dropped concerning the prolonged absence of the seven or eight persons who had been concerned in the kidnapping of Boone ; but they certainly did not consider it essential or desirable to intimate to any one the connection which they had had with the delay in the return of these adventurers, they, however, informed Judge Anderson of all the incidents of the capture, and were advised by him to continue to keep the matter a profound secret.

"You see, Rafe," said the Judge, "little either of you know of what may have happened in those lonely woods after you left ; the whole matter may come up hereafter, and on that account as well as on many others, your plan of going out with Boone appears to be a good one in the present troubled state of the times.

"Although my position should perhaps deter me from such recommendation, I can not but think that the further you are away from this locality, the better it will be for all concerned."

"From your way of receiving this, Judge," said Rafe, "I am led to suppose that you have not changed your intentions in regard to Boone."

"Certainly not," observed the Judge, with emphasis. "While it is true that I have met with a very serious loss, and one that in some particulars can not be re-

placed, it is also true that the pecuniary misfortune will not fall upon me in the end.

"The Government, you know," he continued, smiling, "will continue to take care of its honest servants. The taxation of this county may be increased next year, but certainly I shall not suffer ultimately.

"Some of my friends who are concerned with us in our enterprise, have also been sufferers at the hands of the Regulators; some of them more severely than myself. Though they have lost much that can not be replaced, they are not ruined, and can still control large means; and the amount that I think will be required to carry out our project is not sufficiently great to seriously incommode any of us.

"As regards the general question, while I regret, of course, the time lost, and the danger and hardships to which Boone and those of you who went to his assistance have been subjected, these incidents need not materially interfere with the project as a whole.

"In going to the assistance of Boone," he added, 'you did precisely what I should have advised and wished under the circumstances. Situated as I am, I could hardly get along without Boone, and I owe you and your associates a debt of thanks for having proceeded so adventurously and so energetically toward his recapture.

"And I am happy to add," and here he bowed to Harry, "that I shall with pleasure confer upon your friend Mr. Calvert, if he joins Boone and yourself, a patent for as much land as he may desire for his own uses,

"So far as my immediate plans are concerned, I am only remaining here with my family as the guest of my friend and neighbor, and my stay must be shortened as much as possible.

"The Government is determined to take the most energetic course in suppressing this insurrection. Already the militia have been called into requisition, concentrated, drilled, and properly officered.

"Next year these ruffians will be captured individually; or, if they combine, will be attacked in force, and the entire movement suppressed, no matter at what cost of lives or property.

"They are already pretty well scared by the determination which is being manifested on the part of the Government, and I anticipate no further trouble, at least so far from the center of the insurrection as Granville is.

"I have given the necessary orders, and shall at once commence to rebuild. I have also undertaken correspondence, which will enable me to gather together suitable furniture and fittings for my future residence; this is likely to occupy me during the next year.

"In the meantime, as far as you are concerned—and I am glad of your having friends who are willing to join you—I desire that you will follow out my original intentions, unite yourselves with Boone, place yourselves under his orders, and proceed with your exploration as already directed."

After some further conversation, the Judge concluded to send Rafe with Harry Calvert to the coast, in order

to facilitate and hasten all his business arrangements with regard to rebuilding his house.

The two only remained a day with the Judge, and then started on their journey. After proceeding together about ninety miles they separated. Harry to go north into Virginia, his idea being, on arriving at the first seaport, to take vessel for Baltimore; while Rafe continued on to prosecute the Judge's business.

It was agreed between them that they should meet at Hillsborough in the following March, a day being appointed, to meet which their arrangements should be made; and it was agreed that whichever one should arrive first should await the other.

It is unnecessary to follow the Judge's secretary in the conduct of the affairs in his charge, and we will, therefore, accompany Harry in his progress northward.

After a journey without adventure, he arrived at Norfolk, where he was fortunate in finding a small vessel loading and bound for Baltimore.

A week's delay, which he passed in needed rest and recuperation, found him on board this vessel; and after rather a boisterous voyage, but without accident, he reached Baltimore; here he found that the news of his cousin's inheritance had preceded him, and that his associates were all better informed than himself as to the facts in the matter.

While most of these liked and admired Harry sufficiently not to permit his misfortunes to have any weight in disturbing their friendship for him, there were a sufficient number of a different nature, who suc-

ceeded in making it quite uncomfortable for him to move in his usual circles. This made it desirable for him to close up his affairs as speedily as possible, and leave, he hoped forever, a place which had become essentially disagreeable to him.

One of his first acts, however, was to visit his attorney, whom, also, he found to be well-informed as to his uncle's disposition of his property, and from whom he learned that Gabriel Herron, the heir, had not been heard from in a number of years.

He was said to have been reckless and dissipated in his life at home, and had finally found himself in some trouble sufficiently important to induce him to leave the country. Whither he had gone was not known, but it was believed he was living in India; and the lawyer informed Harry that a messenger had been sent to Calcutta to endeavor to obtain traces of him.

The fact of his absence from the country was well known to the testator, who had specifically mentioned it in his will, adding that if no tidings should be obtained concerning him within a period of seven years, the bequest should be diverted from its original destination, and should accrue to Harry Calvert.

"What do you think of all that?" asked Harry of the lawyer, after the latter had concluded his statement.

"What do you mean?" said the other. "What do I think of the will, or of the probability of your consin's ever getting his bequest?"

"Well, both."

"As to the will," continued the lawyer, "I do not know what to think. Why your Uncle Frederick should have so suddenly changed his mind (for I always supposed he had made it up definitely in your favor), I can not imagine. In this connection I would like to ask you one personal question ; you need not answer it if you do not like to.

"Have you done anything to occasion this change in your uncle, or do you personally know of any reason for it?"

"I have not only done nothing that should have gone to my injury in his mind, but, on the contrary, our relations have always been of the pleasantest nature. All his letters to me have always been of the kindest, and without absolutely so stating, have been of a nature to give me the impression that he intended to make his will in my favor.

"When I was visiting him he was more than kind, more than hospitable. He not only entertained me as he would an honored guest, introducing me to all the gentry of his neighborhood, but on my leaving him, as you are aware, he made me a handsome gift, which enabled me to clear my plantation of debt. But let us not proceed further with this part of the subject."

"Well, then," pursued the lawyer, "in answer to the second half of our question, as to the probability of your cousin succeeding. I must say, from what I have learned regarding him, I do not think they are in favor of that conclusion. Gabriel Herron seems to have been a wild, harum-scarum, devil-may-care kind of a fellow in

college ; always in disgrace and under discipline ; who was rusticated, and would have been expelled but for his family influence, and this succeeded only in enabling him to withdraw before he had finished the course.

“ Almost immediately thereafter he got into serious difficulty in Dublin, of the nature of which I have my own ideas : worrying his family, who got money enough together to send him out of the country. He certainly went to Calcutta—of that I believe there is no doubt ; but that was a good many years ago, and whether he ever removed from that country, I know not.”

“ My cousin, if he is living, is a good deal older than I, is he not ? ” queried Harry.

“ Oh, yes,” said the lawyer, “ he must be twenty years or more older ; he belonged to the older branch of the family ; his mother, who was a Calvert, having married very young. My own belief is that he is dead, and that the money in question—and at interest it will have become a very large sum seven years from now—will eventually go to yourself.”

“ However,” said Harry, “ that is all problematical ; I may be dead myself before then. I suppose there can be no doubt about the validity of the will ? ”

“ Oh, not the slightest,” replied the other. “ My information comes to me direct regarding it, and there is no doubt of its having been properly signed, witnessed, and recorded.”

Harry was silent for a moment ; then he heaved a sigh, and as if by that action discharging the subject from his mind, he said : “ Very well, I have something

else to speak to you about. I want to sell my plantation."

The lawyer looked surprised. "Why do you do that?" he said. "It is just now in excellent condition and if you would stay here and look after your interests, you would soon be far on the way to become as rich as your uncle."

"There is no use in discussing that question," said Harry firmly. "I have made up my mind, and we will not waste time. I have the best possible reasons for my course, one of which, by the way, is, that no amount of money or degree of success could induce me to live here or in this neighborhood, any longer than necessity demanded."

"Oh, all right!" said the lawyer; "if you have made up your mind, I shall not attempt to change it. You will have no difficulty in selling your plantation for a fair price; indeed, I have a customer in my mind," he continued, thoughtfully; "a young gentleman who has just arrived here from London with a good deal of money and not so much brains, and certainly not much experience."

"He is anxious to equip himself, in respect to the last quality, by running a plantation. Yours will just suit him, and I will see him this very day and sound him concerning it. Do you wish to fix a price upon it, or will you leave it to me?"

"I will leave that entirely to you," said Harry, rising; "I certainly know nothing of its present value and besides, if I did, I would depend sooner upon your

judgment. I will only mention, however, that I shall go out to the place to-night and will stay there until you have effected a sale, and that the purchase will not include my horses, while I shall reserve such personal articles as I may want to retain; all such will be left out of the schedule which I will send you to-morrow. The hands will go with the plantation. If they have not increased or decreased since I have been away, there are about forty of them. The overseer will, I know, want to stay there, and I shall be glad to recommend him.

“As to everything else—price, terms, time of handing over the property, and so on—I leave it all in your hands, only begging that you will complete the transaction as speedily as possible. It is quite unnecessary for me to add, that I hope you will take good care of my interests, for I know you would do that with more justice, and I might add generosity, than you would if they were your own.”

The lawyer laughed aloud with a gratified look at this compliment, and the two separated. The same evening, as he had stated he should do, Harry rode out to the plantation, where he received a warm welcome from his slaves.

Harry had always been a kind master to them, and their delight at his return was speedily changed to every manifestation of warm regret when they learned that he was about to permanently leave them. The relation of master and slave at this time, where it was at all kindly and wholesome, was of the most agreeable character in regard to both.

Pretty generally in the case of plantations, the slaves had been long held in the same family. The evil-disposed and those otherwise obnoxious, were gradually weeded out by the process of "natural selection," and those who remained were of the best class, faithful, capable, and trustworthy; this was the case, to a remarkable degree, with those in Harry's charge, and, consequently, they felt, as they expressed, a sincere sorrow at parting with him.

The change was made even sooner than Harry himself had anticipated, for three days from the time of his arrival at the plantation, the lawyer rode up there in the evening accompanied by the young Englishman of whom he had spoken, and who was quite as anxious to buy as Harry was to sell.

On going over the plantation the following day, he expressed entire satisfaction with everything, and great anxiety to complete the bargain at once. The details were speedily concluded, and twenty-four hours afterward Harry had bidden farewell to his home; and after sending such articles as he had chosen from his personal property (including his horses) to Baltimore, he followed them himself, and, comfortably established in a tavern, awaited the completion of his business.

This was effected on the following day, and with a handsome sum deposited in the hands of his bankers, and sufficient money about his person to answer his probable wants for the immediate future, Harry was free to move in any direction that seemed good to him.

It was by this time late in January, and as there re-

remained to him several weeks before the time of his appointment with Rafe Slaughter, Harry determined to pay a visit to Philadelphia, which city, curiously enough, he had never yet seen.

His distaste for Baltimore and all its associations not only continued, but increased, as the slight improvement in his fortunes brought about him those of his former companions who had shown a desire to avoid him after being informed of his changed condition. He accordingly took the coach for Philadelphia, and reaching that city, passed a pleasant fortnight, making many friends and acquaintances; while there, to his astonishment, the name of his successful competitor for his uncle's fortune was brought anew to his mind.

Happening to be in a store one day making some purchases of articles he would be likely to need on the journey he purposed undertaking, he overheard a customer in conversation with the proprietor of the store, mention the name of Gabriel Herron, a fact which quite astonished him, since it was not a common name. He waited until the customer had retired, when he ventured to ask the old Quaker who kept the store what he knew of the person whose name had just been mentioned. The old man looked at him curiously for a moment.

"He was employed by me some eight or ten years ago, and that person was inquiring after him," he said, presently.

"Do you know anything of his antecedents?" asked Harry.

"Very little," was the reply. "He came here without letters of introduction of any kind, and I took him on chance, happening to want somebody at that moment.

"He was intelligent, educated, and industrious, but I soon found that he led a wild and reckless life, and was not suited for my employ, so I dismissed him."

"Do you know what became of him?"

"Nothing more than what he told me; he said that he should go to Boston, and from there, probably return to his home; since then I have never seen him or heard of him, and the information I have just given you, was what I gave to the gentleman whom you overheard."

Harry thanked the store-keeper for his answers, and having completed his purchases, retired to his lodging-house, whence he immediately sent a letter to his lawyer in Baltimore, containing a concise statement of the information he had received.

This letter he soon after followed to its destination; but this, with a conversation on the subject which he had with the lawyer before leaving Baltimore, resulted in no conclusion of importance.

Indeed the chance information he had received only added to the probability that the person in question was still continuing his wanderings in strange lands since if he had been anywhere in the United Kingdom, the means undoubtedly used to discover him (as is customary in such cases) would have certainly found him.

Leaving Baltimore, Harry traveled as rapidly as pos-

sible, with necessary resting-spells, and, without any special occurrence of importance, reached Hillsborough at the time agreed upon with Rafe Slaughter.

But here he found a message from the latter, informing him that the Judge's business was likely to detain him a month longer in Granville, and that Harry could either await him at Hillsborough, join him in Granville County, or push on to Boone's, where they would meet as soon as Rafe could make the journey.

Little foreseeing how much of importance hung on his decision, or how it would affect, not only himself but the future of the one nearest and dearest to him Harry concluded to remain in Hillsborough.

He accordingly sent a messenger to Granville, acquainting Rafe with his conclusion, and set himself to waiting patiently during the time specified.

The time hung heavily on his hands, and having nothing especial with which to occupy his mind but his anxiety to reach Boone's and meet his betrothed: Harry amused himself by making acquaintances among the Hillsborough people, and particularly in the circles of the Regulators wherever he could find them.

To this course he was led, partly by real sympathy with the actual wrongs against which they were struggling, and partly by curiosity to discover, if possible, the motive of Boone's kidnapping.

Some expressions employed by Judge Anderson in conversation, and something in his manner, had led Harry to believe that he was not entirely opposed to the sentiments, at least, which actuated the Regulators,

or such of them as were in this conflict from motives of principle.

Again, Rafe's method of stating the nature of the Judge's plans had awakened his curiosity. There was already "in the air" a feeling of antagonism against the King's government, existing more strongly, even, in the eastern Colonies than in North Carolina.

Even in the latter Colony, the stamp-act, for instance, had been received with a universal howl of execration. The people rose and demanded from Gov. Tryon the person of James Houston, stamp-master; who, on being surrendered, was carried to the market-house at Wilmington, and made to take an oath that he would not execute his office; this had occurred in 1765.

Harry found that this whole subject was being freely talked over among such of the Regulators as he met, and he became impressed with the conviction that their movement would be eventually swallowed up in a far grander one of the same character. He could probably have gained much more information than he did, had he been willing to associate with Stephen Roberts. But the interview he had held with the man had prejudiced him in his disfavor; and besides, he could not forgive him for the connection he still believed him to have had with the outrage on Boone.

Once only during his stay in Hillsborough did Harry meet Stephen Roberts face to face. On this occasion the Regulator accosted him from his own doorstep, and desired to speak with him; Harry entered his office, where he was detained, as it chanced, for nearly an hour

while Roberts plied him with questions as to his view of public affairs. He was careful, however, to communicate nothing that would disclose his own opinion; and Harry left him with his mind in a whirl of doubt as to the reason why the interview had taken place at all.

It was not until the middle of May that Rafe Slaughter arrived in Hillsborough; and, notwithstanding they then pushed on with great haste, they were chagrined to find, on reaching Boone's farm, that the hunter had gone on without them.

He had taken his departure on May 1st, and had united with him, John Findlay, John Stuart, Joseph Holden, and James Moncey, all experienced hunters and backwoodsmen, and had left behind him another of the party, William Cool, to guide the others on his trail. The party had left the Yadkin on May 1st, and now it was the 20th of that month, so that Boone and his companions had about three weeks' start.

Harry and Rafe were for proceeding immediately to follow Boone's steps; but here a new difficulty presented itself in the person of Maude.

The young girl had languished from December until May, fretting for her absent lover. Now that he was restored to her, only to be again torn from her side, her heart rebelled; and notwithstanding the misconstruction that might be put upon her wish, she declared that he should not go into the wilderness without her.

But to this Harry would not for a moment consent, though it made his heart bleed to leave her for a long and perilous absence. He had by this time, and after

discussing the matter fully with Rafe, on whose advice he relied, determined that he would not marry Maude until this expedition was completed, and he was entitled to the estate which Judge Anderson had promised him.

As to permitting the girl he loved and respected to accompany him in any other position than as his wife he would not listen to it. In this dilemma, Rafe made a suggestion which promised to arrange the matter satisfactorily to all parties.

As Maude was determined to follow the fortunes of her lover, and as Mademoiselle and Rose were to accompany her, Rafe suggested a compromise.

This was to the effect that Harry and the guide whom Boone had left behind should start at once to overtake Boone, and that the rest of the party should follow at about the time when Boone's party would be returning, and, meeting them on their way back, should return with them. The females of the party would then not have to go far enough into the woods for the excursion to be dangerous; Harry's scruples would be consulted; Maude would have the prospect of rejoining her lover and the promising excitement of the journey to occupy her in the meantime; and thus all would be satisfied.

Maude demurred a little at first, as she would still experience the separation from Harry which she deplored; but was at length induced to consent to this arrangement. Harry accordingly bade her a tender farewell, and set forth with Cool, while the others prepared to wait the necessary period of delay—a period

which Rafe determined to make as long as possible, so as to shorten the journey which Maude persisted in undertaking.

As to the journey itself, so far as the women were concerned, nobody felt any particular doubts or scruples. In those days it was common for women and even refined ladies to undertake long migrations through the wilderness.

It was in fact no more than Squire O'Brien's family had done less than a dozen years before, and when the section to which they migrated was nearly as wild, and as much infested with Indians, as was the region now to be explored. As for Maude, she was accustomed to make long and rough journeys about the country: while Mademoiselle Raimonde remembered very well, and not disagreeably, her original migration from the sea-board to the place now occupied by the Squire's estate.

They would be properly dressed and prepared for the adventure, and none of the party experienced any fears as to their being able to prosecute it safely and successfully.

CHAPTER XIII.

A very long chapter, in which certain of the characters begin the practice of pioneer life in earnest. The Reader makes a third in a discussion on moral philosophy, which is interrupted by a very sudden and unexpected occurrence, and Mike Dooley increases his knowledge of Natural History.

THE reader who desires to have a correct conception of the nature of the country west of the Cumberland range at the period of this story, must imagine at the outset, a tract of territory extending beyond any limits then known to exist, and which had been untrodden by the white man, and was as unknown a wilderness as any portion of the globe ; but three or four hunters, among whom, John Findlay was one, had penetrated this region, and they only to a short distance of the mountain range we have just named.

From their story, it was known to the few whites whom they encountered in their frontier residence, that the country that forms now the eastern section of the State of Kentucky, was extensively wooded and well-watered. The timber included ash, walnut, hickory, and sugar-maple ; in the river bottoms, cottonwood, and in some sections, the magnolia, besides other trees common to this latitude.

While immediately west of the mountains it was hilly, though with heights not rising to any great eminence,

beyond and along the valleys there were wide-spreading plains.

Here immense herds of buffalo ranged at will, and the only tracks through the limitless forests were formed by them as they went to and from the salt-licks or springs which were common in Kentucky, and were necessary to their subsistence.

As has been already stated, this territory was neutral ground so far as the Indians were concerned, although it actually belonged to the Cherokees—who with the Shawnees and other tribes were not infrequently involved in warfare among themselves, a fact which caused this part of the country to be often the scene of bloody contests when parties of two hostile tribes chanced to meet in the forest or on the plains.

Rumors of such contests were common among the peaceful Indians, and through them had reached the whites along the border; and so it had occurred that this was known as the "Dark and Bloody Ground."

The tendency of the whole Colonial settlement in the beginning, as ever since, was westward.

With a wild energy and enthusiasm which would seem to have been bred into them from the very grandeur of the country, the natives developed pioneers in large numbers, and these constantly spread the tide of emigration, until it seemed that no expanse of territory, however great, would ever be sufficient to satisfy the constantly increasing demands of these vigorous and hardy people.

There was a restlessness, and a desire for exploration

forever being awakened among the young men, which had already resulted in the production of the class of adventurers of whom Boone, Findlay, and Harrod were types.

These men were active, strong, fearless, and accustomed to hunting excursions; far more familiar with nature than with men; expert with the rifle and the knife; never satisfied to remain upon their farms, or to devote their time to husbandry or other quiet and peaceful pursuits.

It would seem that the spirit that Boone confessed actuated him most, in some measure directed them; yet among themselves, as Boone had stated, they were little inclined to recognize such motives, but attributed their course of life purely to a love of adventure, to the excitement of the chase, and to the natural impulse to drive back the red man, whom they hated, even though the territory was his.

Two years had passed since we left the characters in this story, and since Boone had begun his dangerous and adventurous exploration into this wilderness, and nothing had been heard either of himself or his companions.

At the time we have now reached, his brother, Squire Boone, had set forth on an undertaking to find him and at the same time convey to him a supply of ammunition and other necessities for which he must have by this time become in extreme want.

With the journey of Squire Boone, this story has nothing to do, and it needs only to be said here, that

he accomplished his purpose, and despite the apparent difficulties in the way of so doing, succeeded in following his brother through the almost trackless wilderness, and finding him encamped.

It was a lovely day in September, 1771, when a column of smoke arising among the trees that covered a considerable elevation standing at least a hundred miles to the north-west of what is now known as Cumberland Gap, would have made known to any passing hunter or chance Indian who might have been in that vicinity, that some kind of human life and action occasioned its appearance.

No hunter or any Indian was near enough to observe this evidence of camp-life and activity, but the reader being placed in a position to acquaint himself with what was occurring, may become better informed.

A little opening in the woods offered excellent facilities for encampment, and here a fresh fire had been kindled whose smoke sought the clouds above.

About the fire, resting upon the grass, or moving in pursuit of different duties, might have been seen the various persons whose intended emigration into the wilderness was referred to in the last chapter.

The fire itself was being sustained by Mike Dooley, whose appearance was changed but little since we last saw him, and who still exhibited the activity of movement and vivacity of manner which had always characterized him.

Down on his knees in front of the blazing logs, he was vigorously poking the hot coals together, prepar-

tory, apparently, to a satisfactory culinary arrangement for breakfast. Behind him, and just appearing from the woods, was Thomas Hardeman, bearing in his arms a number of newly-cut fagots to replenish the fire.

The sharp ringing of an axe would have carried the eye of a spectator to where, some few rods away, the short but active form of Rafe Slaughter wielded the implement in question, as he swung it vigorously with his long arms, while he cut the wood which his companion transferred to the point of use.

At one side were Maude O'Brien, her companion Mlle. Raimonde, and the negro girl Rose. Maude was engaged in exercising a feminine accomplishment, as she mended a garment belonging to one of the men of the party, which had evidently met with misfortune.

Rose was busy getting out such of the utensils as were required for cooking. The French woman was employed in preparing breakfast, which seemed to consist of good-sized venison steaks and coffee. A little further off their Indian guide sat on the stump of a tree, cleaning his rifle.

The party was complete ; apparently in good health and spirits, and did not appear to have suffered materially in any particular from the effects of their long journey and camp-life.

Raising her eyes from her occupation, Mlle. cried out to Mike : " Are the coals ready ? "

" They be," said Mike, sententiously.

" Then I will go to make the cuisine," she continued, and at the same moment proceeded with her steaks,

which she carried on a tin platter, to where Mike was kneeling, and at once entered upon the important duty of cooking breakfast.

"Rafe," shouted Hardeman, "unless you are anxious for more exercise, you may stop your chopping ; there is more wood here than we can use in two days."

Rafe said nothing, but after a few more vigorous strokes with his axe, desisted from his labors and joined the others.

"I hope you rested well, Miss Maude," he said. The young girl looked up and smiled as she answered pleasantly :

"You take such good care of me, you and Mr. Hardeman, that it would be cruel in me to insinuate that I did not rest well, if it were true, which it is not ; for I slept charmingly, and feel equal to anything."

"To breakfast, for instance," said the younger man, who had now joined them ; "such a lovely morning would give even a sick person an appetite."

"Well, Miss Maude," continued Rafe, as he threw himself by her side on the grass ; "you have by this time quite overcome whatever fears you might have had at the beginning of our undertaking."

"Yes, indeed ; we have seen nothing but beautiful things since we left the farm, and although I confess I felt at the beginning a little nervous as to what we might possibly meet, I am so no longer. It would be paying all you brave fellows a poor compliment not to feel safe in your company."

"But I think," said Hardeman, "that a good many

of the stories about the Indians that have been told by the men who have come into this region, have been fictions, or at least exaggerated. From all I could learn before I left home, there are nothing but peaceful Indians so far east as this."

"Why should they come here?" queried Maude, "when there is so much territory, as we hear there is, quite as well adapted to their wants, away to the far West of us?"

"Why, indeed," observed Rafe, "I expect they lead a roving life, and go over the whole continent if they choose, at their own pleasure; but not far from here, as I learn from John, there are favorite hunting-grounds where the buffalo range in great numbers, and are, of course, an attraction to the Indians."

"John," he continued, looking toward the Indian guide, "how far do you think we are from the nearest buffalo range?"

The Indian looked up, and ceased a moment from his occupation of cleaning his gun. He was a Cherokee, familiarly known as Indian John, and who had been picked up by Rafe in the vicinity of the Yadkin, whither he used to go, about once a year, on his way to the nearest settlement, with peltries to exchange for ammunition. Among the frontiersmen he had a good reputation for honesty and fidelity; a man about thirty years of age, he was nearly six feet in height, rugged, and straight as an arrow, while his aspect was fearless and dignified, without being in the least savage.

"Ugh!" he said, as he prepared to answer Rafe's

question ; "buffalo plenty one—two—three day journey way there." As he named the days, he numbered them off on his fingers, and then pointed westward with his left hand to signify the direction.

"So near?" said Rafe, surprised.

"Do dou think," said Maude, addressing the Indian, "we will find any Indians there, John?"

"Indian not there now. Bime by come plenty. Get buffalo meat. Ugh!"

"Then, according to that," said Hardeman, "before 'bime by' comes, we would do well to be past the hunting-ground."

"Exactly," remarked Rafe ; "at present we will take a day for rest, and then we will push on."

"Our larder needs replenishing," observed Maude ; "Mlle. tells me that we are going to eat our last meat for breakfast."

"Well," said Rafe, "one of us will go out this morning, and we are very certain to see a deer ; at least we have been fortunate in that direction thus far."

By this time the pleasant aroma of coffee signified that the meal was about prepared, and presently Mlle. called all to breakfast.

Though leading a rough life ; sleeping at night on a bed of boughs, and often with nothing but the heavens over them, save that sometimes a rude wigwam was hastily constructed by the men in times of storm for the shelter of the females ; notwithstanding these conditions and all the inconveniences of camp-life, the party were not accustomed to surrendering all their

civilized habits; and leaving her sewing to be completed at another time, Maude proceeded to make preparations for the meal.

From one of the knapsacks which were borne by the men of the party, a clean cloth was taken and spread upon the grass, and upon this the tin plates and dishes, the delft cups for coffee, and the other necessary articles for a comfortable and not altogether a savage meal, were soon neatly arranged; then the tempting steaks were placed before the hungry travelers, and with a cup of coffee and the inevitable fried pork and corn-dodgers, which were staple articles—the corn-meal not having yet been quite exhausted—a quite palatable and sufficient repast was obtained.

One day was like another in these particulars in the present life of our friends, varied only as to the nature of the food enjoyed by the variety furnished through the skill and good luck of the hunters.

Sometimes a wild turkey graced the board; sometimes wild pigeons, of which large numbers were occasionally met, furnished an agreeable substitute; and occasionally these were exchanged for rabbits or squirrels, of which the woods were full; no wild animals but deer had been seen by them since entering the woods, but Indian John not infrequently warned them to be on the look-out for catamounts and bears, which were by no means uncommon in those parts.

The meal over, Rose devoted herself to cleansing and gathering together the utensils and dishes, which were placed on one side ready for future use. Maude re-

turned to her sewing, and Hardeman and the guide started into the woods for game. Rafe remained behind with Mike to keep guard over the camp.

Rafe and Maude had long before this become great friends. The peculiar nature of Judge Anderson's secretary of which a special characteristic was reticence, had expanded under the glow of a disposition so gentle and tender, yet withal so earnest and forceful as Maude's.

Rafe had constituted himself her special guardian during their peregrinations; and especially at night, he watched over her with a care and fidelity which would have been remarkable in any man accustomed to ties of relationship or friendship with many women. To one like Rafe, who had hitherto had but little association with the fair sex, rather avoiding women, it was impressive that the least thought of gallantry never entered into his mind in connection with Maude; yet his devotion to her might have been that of a lover, so true and constant was it.

Often in the dead watches of the night, even when he was not on guard, Maude had awakened to see the spectral figure of the secretary marked against the sky, as, leaning on his rifle, regardless of what other protector she might have, he kept watch over her with a devotion that was sleepless and untiring.

Not an unaccustomed sound could occur, a movement in the underbrush, or the fall of a tree in the distance, but he was on the alert to assume his position of guardian of the fair girl whom he had taken into his charge.

Meanwhile their daily association had brought out the salient points of the characters of both. With her heart full of love for Harry Calvert, and her mind constantly weaving new threads of life from her impressions of him, Maude naturally desired to converse most on this congenial topic, yet her modesty was such as to prevent her from introducing it.

But Rafe divined quite readily what subject would most closely engage the thoughts of this pure young girl; and, when opportunity offered, would frequently occupy the time in recalling pleasant memories of the absent lover.

During their journey to Granville County, and afterward on their return westward, Harry had manifested a cheerfulness of disposition and character, with a skill in conversation, which rendered him a most agreeable companion.

There was nothing hidden beneath the frank and open exterior of the young man which need fear investigation on being brought to light; and Rafe, with real satisfaction, had learned to esteem and respect his companion and friend for many qualities and virtues which did not at once appear on the surface.

It was now most agreeable to him to recall such impressions, and to strengthen in the mind of the eager, happy girl who listened to him, her own admiration for her cousin. So that the conversation between the two on this occasion, as was usually the case, had reference to the one subject of interest to them both.

"Rafe," said Maude, after the latter had occupied

some time in relating incidents, not already told, connected with their journeying together; "Rafe, you have described to me much of what my cousin said to you, and of his general manner and conduct while with you. Now, won't you tell me just what you think of him? I want to know how his character and temperament appear to an entirely unprejudiced person. Of course, I have my own opinion," she added, archly, and with a slight heightening of her color.

"But you are," said Rafe, laughing, "not 'an unprejudiced person.'"

"Clearly not," replied the girl, "since we are bound together by ties of relationship."

"Very well put," observed Rafe. "and in return for your ingenuity, I will answer your question just as I know it was meant.

"I did have a constant opportunity for forming an intelligent idea of Harry's character and temperament, and I may observe that while I would naturally have studied these in your interest—that is, in the interest of both of you—I had also other reasons, which were no less important to my mind, to lead me to this course.'

Rafe paused, and Maude looked at him with some surprise manifested in her countenance; she said nothing, however, and he continued:

"Your cousin is one of that kind of men who mature late. From all I can gather, he has hitherto led a comparatively indolent, and, to some extent, purposeless life; but this has **not** been on account of any lack of

capacity, or any fatal tendency toward constant idleness, such as is the besetting sin of many of our young men in the best circles in our largest cities.

"In Baltimore it is particularly the case, as I happen to know from my own experience there; and Harry, with his expectations and the circumstances surrounding him, might very readily have been much more lazy and useless than he really was.

"The fact is, however, that although he went generally into society, and passed much of his time in amusing himself, he also conducted the affairs of his plantation judiciously, and with a proper sense of his position as a man having the control and direction of numerous instruments.

"I shall have to concede that the time he passed at Mount Mourne drew much from his employment in that direction, and also that you yourself are responsible for what captious critics would call 'idleness' during that period."

Maude flushed a little, and seemed about to speak, but Rafe continued:

"I am not a captious critic, and I can readily excuse a young man for desiring to occupy as much of his time as possible in such beautiful society."

"Now, Rafe," interrupted Maude, "you know you promised me long ago that you wouldn't pay me compliments."

"But, my dear young friend," he said, "that is no compliment to you, but to your cousin."

"Oh!" she replied, laughing, "that puts another

face on the matter altogether, and I shall have to compliment you—on your ‘ingenuity.’”

“Now, all this being the case,” continued Rafe, “and admitting what I have just said in regard to his character and intelligence in managing his affairs, still one would not look for the thoughtful manliness and determination which I have discerned in Harry Calvert.”

“You know our trip after Boone was conducted under circumstances offering peculiar hardship to a young man like him.

“In the first place, we started off in such haste that we were quite unprepared, never imagining our expedition was going to last nearly so long as it did.

“In the next place, the work we had to do, and which we accomplished, was entirely foreign to him as it was to all of us, except by reason of what we might have picked up or heard, or read concerning the mysteries of woodcraft and detective business in general.

“You have never been told half of what we went through during those months of search through the woods, and by unfrequented roads, often not even seeing any person in a month’s time.

“It was a splendid preparation for the undertaking we have now begun, and as it has proved of good service to me, so I am quite certain it has benefited your cousin. But what I was going to say was, that he displayed, all through, marked characteristics, which, being unlooked for on my part, were all the more satisfactory when found.”

“No amount of exposure or even danger could deter

him from any course which seemed to him the most right, and most direct to achieve his purpose; and he displayed, moreover, a sunny geniality of temper, and amiability of character, which are seldom met with in a man; and, if you will excuse me for saying it, still less frequently in women."

"Oh! Oh!" cried Maude, holding up both hands, "how can you permit yourself to be carried away by your flow of language and your desire to praise Harry, to such an extent as to make an invidious comparison of that sweeping character?"

"My dear young lady, whatever else it was, it was not sweeping; at least not in my mind. I venture to say it to you, because I trust that your knowledge of yourself must show you that you possess in a remarkable degree the qualifications I name; and which, I will say, I consider to be the most beautiful that are given by a beneficent Providence to man or woman.

"It would not be giving your intelligence due justice to imagine that you will deny yourself the possession of these qualities. It would be equally hard upon you to assume ignorance on your part of my capacity to perceive their existence."

"Well, you ought to be a preacher, or a lawyer, or something else that requires the gift of a great many words to tangle up one's ideas and impressions."

"Or a 'medicine man,'" put in Rafe.

"Yes, or a 'medicine man,' whatever that is. I know I ought to scold you well for your caustic criticism of the majority of my sex; but really, after the redundancy

of your argument, I have not the words or the courage to attempt it."

"An omission in your own mental structure, or your present capacity, for which I am profoundly grateful," said Rafe; "but to return, Harry is eminently amiable, but at the same time, as we had opportunity for witnessing during that fight with the Regulators, he has remarkable courage, and stern determination when these are required.

"During our journey to Granville, and afterward on our return together from Hillsborough to Boone's place, Harry conversed very freely with me as to his views on many subjects.

"While in regard to his own matters he showed a clearness of vision and foresight that I would not have anticipated, he was none the less thorough and accurate in his views of public affairs.

"His determination to sell his property, and strike out in a new line, in a new country, and secure for himself a life of which you should be the sharer; this determination was certainly courageous, and would seem at the first glance almost foolhardy.

"It required, also, no little degree of moral courage on the part of both of you to proceed in a course whose immediate result was to be the bringing about of a family convulsion and disruption which would deter most men and women from such action.

"I know perfectly well, perhaps few better, the serious nature of these family and social disturbances. In a general way, where it is practicable, and where it

seems in the line of right, they should be avoided, it for no other reason than that it always appears unfortunate to make many persons suffer, in order to promote the happiness and well-being of a few."

Rafe's remarks had now assumed so grave a cast that the young girl beside him listened eagerly and very seriously to his words. She sat with her face resting on her hand, and her own mind followed his closely, while it unconsciously retrograded as well, and she recalled the aspect of affairs which she had left behind her at Mount Mourne.

Many times her own conscience had upbraided her for her share in the transactions of that eventful day which had seen the departure of all of them from her home, leaving behind them a broken and saddened household.

Arguments in favor of her course had not been wanting to her mind; but they had resolved themselves into that strongest argument of all, to the heart and mind of a woman who loves: the wish and determination of her lover.

As it now seemed that she was perhaps to be brought into contact with reasoning from the stand-point of a man's broader perception of right and wrong, she could not but await anxiously the nature and character of the logic that was to be used.

"It seems hard and even cruel," continued Rafe from his last remark, "that suffering of this nature and for such a reason, should occur; yet is it not a fact that this is the law of nature, in its application to

all humanity? Do not the purposes of life appear to be carried out with utter disregard of individual conditions and feelings? Is it not nearly always the case that the larger number suffer in order that the smaller number shall be wiser and happier?"

"As you have said to me," replied Maude, thoughtfully, "it does seem so. Thus we find that wars are carried on with the sacrifice of large numbers of people and enormous amounts of wealth—which means poverty to still larger numbers—and for the promotion of ideas, which, though they benefit the world in the end, are long in doing so, and then, it may be, only benefit a few."

"You exactly understand my proposition," said Rafe, his face brightening as he perceived the quick intelligence of the girl, and the fact that she had, herself, views on these abstract questions.

"The religions of the East, where I lived for several years, and studied closely its customs and society: these include the sacrifice of the individual in entire obliviousness of that regard for life which we experience in Europe and in this country.

"The Buddhist and Brahmin never reflects on family ties for an instant, where those conflict with what he esteems to be his duty in any instance. And this course of conduct is not confined to the East. The greatest works that have been performed by man have occurred without consideration of such ties, or of any obligations whatsoever, except the completion of the labor in hand.

“Now I know that this, if formulated as a law would seem simply horrible to a Christian and civilized person of our time. It would appear also almost incongruous to draw upon such illustration, or series of illustrations, to emphasize an instance, like your particular case.

“But I am now thinking of the integrity and the wisdom of my friend; and in sustaining these qualities in him I feel that I have a right to draw my illustrations, if necessary, from the heavens above, from the earth beneath, or from the waters under the earth—to bring them down to this case, or, rather, to raise the matter up to its proper dignity.

“And to signify what important results may grow out of this seemingly cruel course, I will say this: Suppose that Harry has formed his design, and carried it out, after the manner I have mentioned, and which you and I understand.

“We will say that you are happily united—and by that I don’t mean by your meeting each other, out here in the wilderness, for that I consider is a foregone conclusion—that you are united permanently, in such a home as he purposes establishing.

“Your migration will encourage others, whom, the necessary hardships which you will encounter will not deter, and the result will be, that a settlement will be made, and this new and beautiful country through which we are passing, will become in time populated.

“The settlement will grow into towns, and these will flourish and increase in population and wealth and in-

fluence, until they become cities. We know what has occurred in a single century on this continent, and I am greatly deceived if the next century will not make the change toward advancement so much greater and more comprehensive that it will entirely dwarf our present surroundings."

The speaker, as he gazed into vacancy while uttering his latest words, seemed wrapt in the contemplations which had arisen in his mind. For the moment he was silent; then he said, enthusiastically, rising at the same moment, and extending his hand westward: "Does not good Bishop Berkeley say with almost the vivid force of a prediction—

" ' No pent-up Utica contracts our powers,
For the whole boundless continent is ours ' ? "

At this moment a diversion occurred which was as unexpected as it was startling.

While the two had been conversing, Mike Dooley had amused himself, by cutting a rod and throwing an impromptu fishing-line into the stream which flowed past a little ways down in the valley.

Mademoiselle sat at some distance, under a tree, reading.

Rose, after the manner of her kind, had flung herself on her back in the sunshine, and was sleeping peacefully, and snoring not so much so.

To this latter maiden, there occurred, at this juncture, an incident which, coming upon her in her somnolent condition, and being decidedly of a novel nature,

roused the young woman to immediate wakefulness, and loud cries of fear and horror.

Something large and heavy, and evidently very much alive, had projected itself from a tree which overhung the place where she was reclining; her first intimation of the intruder being a heavy blow upon the less vital portion of her anatomy—that is, her head—which was sufficiently powerful to turn her completely over, and roll her sideways down the hill, on whose summit she had been peacefully resting.

Startled by the screams which burst from the lips of the negro girl, Maude sprang to her feet; while Mademoiselle, gathering her drapery about her, rushed to where Rafe and her young mistress were standing, as to the safest spot, and proceeded to scream quite as vociferously as Rose herself.

Mike Dooley, hearing the outcry, dropped his pole and hurried up the hill; but on arriving at the scene of excitement stood transfixed, and joined his voice to the others after his own peculiar manner.

“Milly, murthers!” he yelled, “will you look at the baste? Shure it is the biggest tom-cat I iver saw in me loif.”

The “baste” in question, and at which all were now gazing in manifest anxiety, to say the least, was undoubtedly an animal of the cat kind, but being about four feet long, and evidently built for heavy work, was no pleasant antagonist to encounter.

The two ladies were now clinging wildly to Rafe.

The animal, evidently quite as much surprised and

startled as any one present, rested on its haunches, and gazed from one to the other, uncertain whether to attack or retreat.

It was an enormous panther, and the first one, in its wild state, that any of the party had ever seen.

Rafe's mind worked with considerable speed at this juncture.

His rifle was a dozen paces behind him. To go for it, was to leave the girls to their fate, not to speak of the others. He had no knife about him, and the axe which he had used so actively a few hours earlier, he had carelessly dropped by the side of the last tree he had been cutting.

It did not take but a few seconds of time for these reflections to pass through his brain, and then his mind made itself up, and his body acted, executing the work cut out for it.

He suddenly, but not roughly, threw the ladies from him, and made a quick run to the fire, which was still smouldering.

A few good-sized logs were upon it; and in an instant he had grasped the cold end of one of these. The next moment, he sprang right upon the panther with the red and blazing end of the wood directed toward it.

Rafe, with his strong and agile form, and his unexpected blow from a weapon, wielded so many feet away from his shoulder, by reason of his long arm, must have been a sufficiently inexplicable vision to the beast.

The immediate effect was, that the latter became so

terror-stricken as to neglect arranging for his safety—during the only moment when this would have been of any use.

The blazing branch came down upon him, full in the face ; and with a loud roar, he rolled over on his back, and down the hill straight to where Mike was standing.

The latter gave a howl of fright, and turned to escape from the horrible animal ; but he was too late. The revolving body of the panther struck his legs, overthrew him, and the two rolled to the bottom of the hill in confusion.

Rafe, at once perceiving what was about to happen, had dropped his brand, and with a few quick steps gained his rifle, which was fortunately loaded ; and now hurried down the hill to the rescue of the Irishman, whom he found at the bottom actually in the clutches of the infuriated and panic-stricken animal.

Rafe's quick sight, nerve, and muscle were sufficient for the occasion.

In a moment the loud crack of the rifle rang out, and as the two girls reached the decline, they saw the body of the panther writhing in the death agony ; while Mike gathered himself together, none the worse for his tussle, except for a few scratches, and that his already ragged garments were rendered still more unsightly.

CHAPTER XIV.

The party of amateur explorers receives an unexpected addition to its numbers, and Rose once more experiences a collision with a piece of paper, which is not without its own importance.

"BEDAD, Misther Slaughter, you were just in the nick o' time to save him."

"Save who, Mike?" said Rafe, looking astonished.

"Why, the baste, the venimous reptile, the pussy-cat! and do you see the eyes o' him? Begorra, they look like two wax candles at a wake!"

"Yes, but, Mike," interrupted Rafe, "what do you mean by saving him? he doesn't look much as if he was saved now"; and he touched the body of the panther with his foot.

"Arrah! Misther Rafe, don't you see? I meant, you saved him from being kilt intirely by meself; hadn't I just got him by the fur of him? Wasn't I choking him when you come in? Be jabbers! in two minutes more he'd been a dead cat."

Maude and Mlle. had by this time been tempted by their curiosity to overcome their fears and descend the hill to look at the dead panther; they heard Mike's last remark, and Maude said:

"The cat, Mike? You must think it is a pretty large cat."

"You're right, Miss, I do ; I never seen bigger ; and its astonishing altogether ! Bedad, I seen a pussy-cat before now, when it was frightened and mad like, swell up its tail until it was as big as the whole of it ; but it come down afterward to its natural size. But this cat swelled up the whole of it to ten times the original and begorra ! savin' your presence, it's that way still. I don't ondersthand it."

All laughed at Mike's extraordinary idea of the transformation of a tom-cat into a panther four feet long.

But it was hopeless to try and explain the matter ; so after admiring the beautiful fur of the animal, they ascended to the top of the hill, leaving Mike to undertake the duty of skinning it ; and as he said he had often skinned rabbits, and even cats, in his boyhood, he had no diffidence about undertaking the present task.

As they reached the camp, the hunters came in hurriedly, as though under some excitement. They had no game with them ; which was explained, however, in a few words.

"We heard your rifle," said Hardeman, "and, thinking something might be wrong, we dropped what we had shot, and ran in as fast as possible."

The panther episode was explained ; and then, while Indian John went off to pick up the game, Hardeman joined the others and went down to view Rafe's prize.

The whole story had to be related for Hardeman's benefit ; and by that time John had returned, bringing in two wild turkeys, a string of pigeons, and a brace of rabbits.

It was now past noon, and as all were very hungry after the incidents of the morning, the ladies were soon engaged in preparing dinner; and while John relieved Mike, who was making a rather poor job of skinning the panther, the latter employed himself in picking the birds.

Taking an opportunity when Maude and Mlle. were at some distance from them, Hardeman signified to Rafe that he wished to speak to him privately.

"I want to tell you," he said, "that about two miles from here we struck a trail!"

"What was it?" said Rafe; "not Indians, I hope?"

"While that is possible," observed the other, "yet John was very certain it was white men. There were two of them and they wore moccasins. But something in the weight of the tread, or something else that was past my finding out, indicated to him that they were certainly not Indians. He said he was sure of it."

"Which way were they going?" asked Rafe.

"Directly west; and they are already past this camp."

Rafe reflected a few moments. He was not aware that any parties contemplated coming out after them, and still it was not improbable that such might be the case. The exploration fever had awakened a good deal of interest on the frontier; and the fact of Boone and so many other men having started out on an expedition, evidently backed up by a direct purpose, had stimulated a great deal of interest among the hardy backwoodsmen.

Altogether Rafe was not seriously disturbed by the incident. Indeed, he would have welcomed an addition to their number, provided he could have been certain of its character. Having ladies under his charge, however, he felt a deep sense of responsibility; and knowing that the character of many of those who led a frontier life was not of the best, he experienced some doubts.

But there would be time enough to meet an annoyance, if this should prove to be one, when it made its appearance.

It having been determined to remain where they were during the following night, and to commence moving on their journey early the next morning, the afternoon was passed in such pursuits as occurred to the various members of the party; and nightfall found them tired and ready for sleep.

As has already been intimated, it was the custom of the men to mount guard by turns during the night.

At this season the pleasant evenings were long, the full moon rose shortly after twilight, and as Rafe had the first watch, which would be until twelve o'clock, the others were soon wrapped in slumber, and he alone wide awake, in a position where he was himself in the shadow, while his vision took in the scene of the entire encampment. He sat at the foot of a tree, his rifle in his hands, and his pistol, hunting-knife, and tomahawk in his belt, thoroughly prepared for any emergency.

He had thus sat many a night watching over those in his care, and nothing had ever occurred to require any

action on his part ; but this night was not to pass after the same manner.

It was nearing midnight, and Rafe, a little chilled by remaining long in the same position, was thinking of rising to stretch his limbs, and at the same time replenish the fire, which they generally kept up all through the night, as much for company, and to ward off the wild animals, as for any purpose of warmth.

He had just formed this intention, when a slight noise, like the crushing of underbrush by some heavy body in movement, attracted his attention, and he was at once on the alert. The noise came from a point directly facing him. His sleeping companions being more on his right ; the two ladies and Rose hidden beneath an impromptu wigwam, a few paces back of the fire.

Rafe cocked his rifle noiselessly, and listened with all the attention possible.

In a few moments the sound was repeated, and as this time it continued, he could readily perceive that it was caused by the steady movement of somebody or something coming through the woods in his direction ; his position was such that he knew he could not be possibly discovered by any one emerging from the forest at that point, and he therefore remained still.

The noise grew louder, though it was still faint enough to show that whatever occasioned it was sufficiently intelligent to make it as slight as possible. This fact made him think that it must be occasioned by human beings, and that impression was presently confirmed by the distinct appearance of a tall dark figure moving

slowly and carefully; and this he saw in a moment was followed by another.

Immediately thereafter, both had left the thick woods, and the forms of two men, dressed in the ordinary hunter's garb, stood plainly out in the moonlight which shone full upon them; they remained perfectly still, and Rafe saw one turn to the other and apparently whisper, while he pointed toward the fire beside which could be seen the recumbent figures of Hardeman and Mike, who were lying close together near it.

Rafe did not hesitate longer, but springing to his feet, and with his rifle at present, he stepped out in the moonlight, at the same time crying loud enough for the new-comers to hear, without awakening the sleepers: .

"Who is there? Speak quick, or I fire."

The two men started simultaneously, and the first one, holding up both hands, answered, "Friends." As his gesture was imitated by his companion, and both stepped forward to meet him, Rafe lowered his rifle a little and started to approach nearer to them.

"Who are you, and what are you doing out here?"

"We are out exploring the country," observed the one whom he addressed, "and seeing the light of your fire, and knowing that a party of whites were in the woods about here somewhere, thought you might be the one, and we would join you if you had no objections."

"If your intentions are peaceful," said Rafe, "and my companions have no objections, I have none; indeed we should be rather glad to increase the strength of our party, provided we could find the right sort of men."

"Well, we can satisfy you about that," said the one who had not hitherto spoken, and who was the older of the two. "We come from Hillsborough way, and if you are the ones we take you for, I guess you must know some people that know us."

The sound of the conversation, which they had carried on in a low tone, had by this time awakened Hardeman, and he arose to his feet and joined the group as soon as he understood that strangers had appeared.

A few words of explanation followed. Hardeman being well acquainted in Hillsborough, asked the new arrivals to mention the names of persons whom they knew, and the answers given being satisfactory to him, and the two men seeming to be straightforward and honest in their manner, their wish to join the others was acceded to.

Both these men were well armed, and apparently thoroughly supplied with ammunition and every necessary for a prolonged excursion through the woods. Each of them had a rifle, which they had let drop from their hands and rested against their shoulders, while they had lifted their arms to show their friendly intentions to Rafe.

The colloquy being over, and Rafe and Hardeman apparently satisfied, the two men remarked that, as they were tired, they would lie down by the fire and sleep, unless they were wanted to watch; this not being required of them, they proceeded to put their intentions into force, and were presently, both of them, sound asleep.

The perfect confidence signified by this act did more to satisfy Rafe than anything they had said.

The two men had given their names as Brownell, being the elder, and Hunter, the younger person.

"They seem honest enough," said Rafe to his companion, after he had satisfied himself that the apparent slumber was genuine.

"Oh, yes! I think there is no doubt but they are the ordinary frontiersmen. The people they named are respectable merchants in Hillsborough. To-morrow, when we see them by daylight, we can judge better, and anyhow they will bear watching, and will get it for some little time yet."

"Yes, decidedly," said Rafe. "Though there is no reason whatever why any one should care to molest us.

do not mean to put trust in any one until I am satisfied as to his character."

Rafe now threw himself down for repose, while Harde-man took his place to keep watch until four o'clock, when he in turn would be relieved by the Indian guide. This, which was the customary programme, was carried out, and nothing further occurred out of the common during the night.

Shortly after sunrise all were stirring, and those who had slept through the incident of the new arrival, were thoroughly surprised on finding when they awoke that their company had become enlarged.

The two men looked fairly well by daylight, and as they at once set themselves to work, doing whatever they could lay their hands to which would accommo-

date the party they had joined ; and as they were respectful and kindly in their manners toward the ladies, all suspicion that still lurked in the minds of Rafe and Hardeman gradually wore away.

After breakfast everything was packed up, and preparations for moving went on rapidly. Brownell and Hunter had been informed of the objects of the expedition : viz., to meet Daniel Boone, if practicable, and discover if Harry Calvert had already joined him, or, in default of that, to find the latter.

"It doesn't look like an easy job to find a man in this wilderness," said Brownell, who had been listening to the objects of the expedition as given by Rafe ; "but it isn't half so hard as it seems. There is Squire Boone, I know he went out and met his brother ; and just before we left he had got back home and started out again with more ammunition. We would have gone with him, if we had not got up to his place too late ; but we got a pretty clear idea of the trail he was following, and I guess we can help you to go right to where Boone had set up his cabin."

"How far do you think it is from here?" said Maude, who was an attentive listener.

"Well, I should think, judging from the distance we have come, that it must be mor'n fifty miles. It's purty well on to'rds the big river that the Injuns tell on, that lies a little north of west from here. You see," he continued, "I guess you have been working a little in the wrong direction."

"How so?" asked Hardeman.

"Well, you kept along north from the gap, running alongside of the foot of these mountains, when your chance of striking your friend would have been better if you had made it more westerly after you crossed the range."

Hardeman looked at Rafe, who presently remarked :

"I expect you are right about that ; you see, all we knew about Daniel Boone's movements was, that he was to keep to the north-west after crossing the range, and we had the impression that he crossed a great deal further north than we did, but perhaps we were wrong."

"Well," said the other, "you were wrong and you were not wrong. The first trip he made out this way, he did cross where you say ; that was about three years ago ; but then he didn't go far west that time. Now, he went through where I say, well south of that, at an easy pass he discovered or heard tell on, and that's the one we come through. Squire Boone told about it when he was home."

"Then your advice would be," said Rafe, "that we should strike off more to the west ?"

"Well, yes," said the other ; "you'll git there quicker. There is a good-sized stream runs out here about four or five miles south-west of this, and I think it's a fork of the river I told you about, and by keeping along that you'll find easy travel, and be nearer to Boone's trail."

The advice seemed judicious, and Rafe, after a little consultation with the others, concluded to follow it. By nine o'clock they had got ready and made a start, keeping more to the west, as Brownell had suggested.

Both he and his companion proved not only serviceable but good-natured and willing.

That day's journey passed without incident of importance, and at dusk they encamped on the bank of the stream, which they had found to be just where Brownell had indicated.

He and his partner took turns, each with one of the others, in watching during the night ; and on the following day they proceeded, all apparently well satisfied with each other and confident of success ; but on the third day after their new companions had joined them, and while they were engaged in taking their mid-day meal, an incident occurred which reawakened the suspicions that had perplexed Rafe's mind when these two first joined them.

This incident was a curious one to happen under such circumstances, and it occurred through the accidental intervention of the girl Rose.

As they were all about beginning their meal, Brownell threw the hunter's knapsack, or satchel, which he wore strapped over his shoulders, on the ground under a tree, a little way from where he sat down to eat.

As the satchel touched the ground a small piece of paper fell out of it, and was carried by the wind some distance away toward the stream. Rose chanced to notice it, and thinking it might be something of importance, remembering also what a disturbance a piece of paper had occasioned in her own life, she ran swiftly after it.

The paper lodged in a bush right at the edge of the

water where Rafe happened to have gone to wash his hands; and as the girl hurried down the bank and seized it, he observed her action, which was entirely hidden from the party above.

"What have you got there, Rose?" he said, and he extended his hand to receive it.

The girl gave it to him, saying as she did so:

"It fell out of dat Massa Brownell's bag, an' I seed the wind kotch it and take it off, an' I run down the bank to git it for him."

Rafe hardly heard her words, for, looking mechanically at the paper, he was struck at seeing his own name written upon it.

It was a scrap, apparently torn from a note-book, and upon it, in a clear, bold, clerical hand, were written the following words, as though it were a memorandum hastily inscribed, and handed to a person to remind him of something:

"Rafe Slaughter (1); Harry Calvert (2). Seven years."

For a moment Rafe was stunned on seeing this apparently meaningless writing; recovering himself, and observing that Rose still stood watching him curiously, he said:

"It's all right, Rose; you needn't say anything about it; it belongs to me, and must have got into his bag when we were packing to start."

And while Rose ran lightly up the hill, Rafe walked slowly after her, pondering the meaning of the extraordinary revelation which had thus seemingly been cast by the winds into his possession.

CHAPTER XV.

Which signifies that amateur exploring is not without its dangers as well as its delights, and introduces the Reader to the noble red man, as he appeared when on the war-path in the year of grace 1771.

AFTER carefully reviewing the subject, and for reasons which it is not at present necessary to state to the reader, Rafe concluded to keep his new discovery to himself.

It was not that he distrusted either Hardeman or any of his other companions ; but on account of the combination of circumstances in which he was interested and the carrying out of which might have been interfered with by pursuing a different course.

The incident, however, assumed considerable prominence in his mind, and the more he reflected upon it, the less was he able to give any interpretation which should be satisfactory to himself.

He was so little known in the Colonies, and seemingly of so little importance, that he could not understand why any one should takè the trouble to attract attention to him.

The mere fact of his name being mentioned in connection with that of Harry Calvert, considering in whose hands the paper had been found, was not in itself remarkable. This might have been done in order to as-

sist the backwoodsmen in finding his party. But this view of the matter was not sufficient to explain it, when the additional words "seven years" were taken into consideration.

But circumstances now occurred which, for the time being, drove further reflection on these incidents from Rafe's mind.

That night the party camped on the bank of the stream that they had been following, and which was in reality a fork of what is now known as the Kentucky River.

As they were getting deeper into the wilderness, and approaching nearer to the hunting-grounds of the Indians, Brownell advised that they should extinguish their fire at night ; which was accordingly done, on the occasion of which we are now speaking.

It happened that the turn to assume the first watch came to Hardeman, and Rafe, being tired more than usual, had thrown himself down early, to take his needed repose.

It was a pleasant night, and the moon was shining brightly, though occasionally obscured by masses of white fleecy clouds that drifted past its face.

It was about two hours before midnight, and all was still in the camp and about it, save the sound of the heavy breathing of the sleepers, and the customary noises of the frogs and tree-toads.

Hardeman was not as close a watcher as Rafe, and he also chanced to be more than usually fatigued after the journey of the day, which had been a long one.

He sat leaning against a tree, with his rifle across his lap. At length the stillness and his own feelings, combined, overcame him with drowsiness; and, though he occasionally recovered himself, this became too strong for his ability to resist it, and he slept profoundly.

A few moments after this had occurred, a quick ear might have detected a movement in the woods; and presently, and as it would have seemed to an observer, almost by magic, so suddenly did it occur, the empty space about the dead embers of the fire was occupied by as many as seven or eight intruders.

They were Indians; strong, stalwart men, in the prime of life, dressed after the Indian fashion, in buckskin hunting-shirts and breeches, with moccasins on their feet, ornamented as to the most of their apparel with beads and wampum, and with feathers in the fillets which bound their heads, and, in some instances, blankets thrown across their shoulders.

Some of these men carried rifles, others bows and arrows; and all of them were armed with the fearful tomahawk.

By some fortunate chance, the accommodations for the sleeping of the female portion of Rafe's party had been placed, on account of the position being eligible, at a few rods distance from where the fire had been built, and where they were hidden by a thin clump of trees; so that the savages entering upon the scene from the opposite direction, saw no one but the sleeping figures of the men, as they lay about the fire in the little open space which had been selected for the camp.

For a moment the Indians stood quiet where they were, and gazed upon the sleepers. Then they conferred hurriedly together, and speedily discerning the figure of Hardeman in his position as guard, and observing that he was the only one whose arms were likely to be of instant service, three of their number moved noiselessly to his side, as he sat in deep slumber leaning against a tree.

His rifle had dropped from his hands, and it was the work of an instant to remove that from where it lay across his lap.

In the meantime the others of the party had separated, and at an apparently concerted signal, every one of the sleepers found himself suddenly awakened, and in the grasp of one of the savages. There was a momentary struggle, confused and interrupted by the loud cries of the suddenly-attacked white men, but the circumstances of the situation were too much against them for successful resistance, and in a very few moments all were prisoners, safely bound with thongs, their hands being tied behind them.

The clouds had now dispersed from the heavens, and the moon shone out brightly, disclosing to the captors the faces and forms of each of themselves, as well as those of the savages.

Looking about from one to another, Hardeman was the first to miss one of their number. Turning his head to Mike, who chanced to be next to him, he whispered: "Where is Rafe Slaughter? I don't see him here."

The other looked about from one to another, and then said: "I don't see him meself, he was lyin' right beyant there," nodding his head in the direction he signified, "when I went to sleep. Begorra, he is as cunning as a fox, and it might happen that he got away with himself."

Inquiries made among the others soon showed that, whatever might have become of Rafe Slaughter, he was certainly not one of the prisoners.

The Indians having their captives safely tied, were now collected together, evidently listening to one of their number, who appeared to be in authority.

There were eight of them in all, and now, as they stood, with their faces plainly disclosed, in the moonlight, Brownell observed to Hardeman:

"They are in their war-paint, and must be a small party, from a larger number, out on the war-path."

A moment's inspection, to one familiar with savage customs, would have shown that this judgment concerning the nature of their expedition was a correct one. Their faces, streaked with red and yellow ochre, bore signs well known to those in the habit of meeting with them that they were on the war-path.

The discussion among them was finally concluded, and apparently by some order from the chief, four of the men dispersed in different directions, evidently in search of something.

"They know there are women in the party," whispered Hardeman to Hunter, "and have gone to look

for them ; of course they can't fail to find them. God help the poor girls !”

Just then there was a loud cry, and two of the Indians returned from behind the clump of trees where Maude, Mademoiselle, and Rose had been placed, and joined the others. By their gesticulations and eager manner, they showed that something unexpected had occurred.

“ Can it be possible that they have escaped ? ” said Hardeman.

“ Faix ! I'll go bail, that Mr. Rafe has heard them black divils, with their paint and feathers, and has gone off and given warnin' to the young Missis.”

“ I guess the Irishman is right,” said Brownell, “ but I don't see how they could possibly get far without being caught.”

Mike's idea was the correct one.

As we said in the beginning of the description of this attack, a quick ear might have heard its preliminary movement. Precisely such a quick ear was listening ; for Rafe, however tired he might be, was so impressed with the importance of his charge, that, as has been already said, no movement or sound, not natural to the situation, could possibly escape him.

He had heard the first movement in the woods, but this had been followed so quickly by the appearance of the Indians, that he had only time to exercise his remarkable agility by dexterously rolling out of his position on the ground, into the shade of the trees, where he was fortunately hidden by a knoll.

From this point, he crawled on his hands and knees, with an absence of noise which would have done honor to any Indian of them all, and so succeeded in reaching the place where the women lay sleeping.

It took him but an instant to awaken Maude and Mademoiselle, while Rose, who might have otherwise made a disturbance, happened to awaken herself.

They all kept their wits about them ; and the nature of the position of things being explained to them in a few whispered words, they followed Rafe down the bank toward the river.

The stream at this point was narrow and shallow, and Rafe's mind was made up in an instant, as to the best course to pursue. He at once took his party into the water, which was not more than a foot deep and about twenty yards wide ; and carefully avoiding splashing, succeeded in getting them safely across, and into the woods on the other side.

Fortunately, when he had made his escape, he had been wise enough, and dexterous enough, to seize his rifle, which was near him, and carry it with him. His other arms were still in his belt, as was his custom in sleeping, that he might be ready when called to take his share in the watch.

Precisely what he anticipated, in adopting the course he had pursued, occurred.

The chief, on learning of the escape of the women, sent out five of his party to search the bank of the river and the neighboring woods, and endeavor to find their trail. Rafe had expected this, however, and with

a shrewdness which did him credit, had made the women step on stones for a considerable distance before entering the water, while he had himself made open tracks into the woods in an opposite direction.

This trail was easily found, in the moonlight, by the Indians, but was of course speedily lost again; and after hunting for an hour in every direction, they were obliged to return, and report their ill-success.

The immediate result of this was to anger the chief greatly, and he showed his disgust and annoyance by his actions and gestures.

From this moment the white prisoners came to the conclusion that the others had escaped, and at once it was agreed upon among themselves, that they would say nothing of Rafe, so that it should not be known that there was a man absent from the party.

As they expected, the chief presently came forward, and directing his looks toward Hardeman, evidently ordered one of the other Indians to lift him from the ground, from which it was difficult for him to rise on account of his arms being bound. This was done, and the white man and Indian stood facing each other.

"White squaw no here," said the chief, who had picked up a little English, doubtless from the traders.

"Where go to."—"No got white man,"—"Lost in woods."—"No eat,—white squaw die."—"You help find white squaw, Injin no hurt,—no help find,—Injin take white man,—shoot." As the chief then made a sign about his head with his forefinger signifying scalping, Hardeman was not at a loss to know what he meant.

He had, however, determined not to disclose the actual situation of his friends, and he accordingly set himself to answer the chief in the best way to avoid this. A sudden thought occurred to him and he said :

“ White squaw gone away in canoe, down the river, she go find her brother, and friends. Not come back.’

The chief understood him and looked at him sternly for a moment, then he said, shaking his head :

“ White man lie—no good—white squaw got no canoe—Injin find white squaw when the sun shine.” He turned on his heel, and Hardeman, taking the movement to signify that the interview was over, seated himself on the ground again.

During the remainder of the night the Indians slept, leaving two of their number to watch the prisoners, who also devoted themselves to taking the rest which had been thus unexpectedly interrupted ; they soon slept despite the alarming character of their situation, and their ignorance of what might be their fate on the morrow.

When they awoke the sun was up, and all but three of the Indians were absent ; these were calmly inspecting the contents of the travelers’ knapsacks and bags, and commenting upon the various prizes which these disclosed.

After having satisfied themselves for the time being with this amusement, they proceeded to get breakfast for themselves ; and while they were engaged in this duty, the chief with the other savages returned, evidently from an unsuccessful search for the runaways.

As the arms of the whites had been gathered together, and were in possession of the Indians, the latter experienced apparently no fear or doubt as to the safety of their captives, and after a time permitted Brownell, assisted by Mike, to set about getting something to eat for their companions; untying them for that purpose, but closely following and watching them in the meantime.

The meal was prepared, and eaten by the captives with such equanimity as was possible under the circumstances.

When it was concluded and the articles they had used packed up and restored to their places in the compact luggage of the party, the Indians signified that they were to take up their line of march.

The sentiments of Thomas Hardeman when he discovered that they were actually going away, leaving Rafe and the others behind, it would be difficult to sufficiently appreciate.

While he was happy that these had escaped their own present and possible future fate, the sense of loneliness which came over the young man was almost too much for him to bear.

Of course there could be no special sympathy between himself and the two who had so lately joined their party. As to Mike, Hardeman felt that he also would grieve greatly at the separation from his young mistress and her companions which now promised to be perpetual.

Indeed a word spoken to Mike in regard to this

brought the warm-hearted Irishman's feelings to the surface, and at once tears came into his eyes. He wrung his hands when Hardeman told him they were about to be carried into the woods by their captors.

"Oh! Begorra!" he cried, "what will become of the young mistress, and 'Frenchy' and the Nager. Oh blessed Virgin, that ever I should live to come to this. Shure, Mr. Hardeman, can't we do somethin'? Bedad, there is only eight of them, and there is five of us; an' if four white men and a dacent Injin isn't equal to eight of them painted divils, what is the good of us, anyhow?"

"That is all very fine, Mike," rejoined the other, "but you must remember that these men are well armed not only with their own weapons, but with ours."

"May the divil get the best of them in the long run. Shure the thaves of the world that they are, that would stale a white man's weapons, and lave him at a disadvantage! Arrah! you black-hearted varmints," he continued, shaking his fist at the group of Indians, "give me a shillalah and ten feet of clear ground, an' I would make your brains rattle round in your heads like peas in a pepper-box."

The Indians who were thus apostrophized, saw very clearly that Mike had worked himself into a passion, and could easily imagine the occasion of it. His wild gestures of anger amused them, and as nearly as it is possible for a North American Indian to laugh, they laughed.

But the chief now signified the necessity for haste, and the white prisoners being forced to load themselves

with their own baggage, and that of the Indians as well, excepting the arms, the start was made, the captives being placed in the middle, with Indians in front and behind.

They were hurried rapidly through the forest in the same direction that their party had hitherto followed ; that is, north-westward, along the bank of the stream.

Excepting a short pause at mid-day to take necessary food, the march was continued with speed until sunset. From the gestures of the chief, Brownell, who best understood them, learned that their immediate idea was to regain a large body of their tribe which had gone on before them, and which they hoped to overtake on the following day.

Foot-sore and miserable, the captives, when night came, and preparations for camp were made, after hurriedly eating the food that was given to them, laid down wherever they were located ; and as the Indians themselves seemed not less fatigued, the camp was soon wrapped in silence.

Two of the savages watched sitting by the fire, which they kept going, each having his loaded rifle on his arm.

Immediately about these were the other Indians, whose guns and bows and arrows had been piled up in a heap under a tree behind them. The white prisoners, with their arms again tied behind them, were in one group together, perhaps a dozen feet away from the others.

So passed the early portion of the night.

By midnight one of the Indian watchers was dozing ; but the other, a young and active man, was on the alert, sitting bolt upright, both hands on his rifle, his eyes fixed on the fire, and his ears keen and watchful to hear any sound that might signify danger.

But, though keen his vision and sharp his ear, the Indian watcher was now to be matched with an intelligence and acuteness far transcending his own.

It was a little past midnight, and the moon had nearly gone down, leaving the camp, save for the still blazing fire, in shadow, when a dark, lithe figure moved among the trees with a silence and celerity which seemed almost impossible.

The burning logs were between this figure and the Indian who watched.

Reaching the group of sleeping white men, a hand was stretched out, and a sharp, bright knife gleamed in the fire-light ; and quickly the thongs which bound the hands of the sleepers were cut, and their arms were free. Only one awakened during this procedure, and that was Brownell, who had experience enough as a backwoodsman not to make any sound.

He moved his head, to signify that he was awake, and turning over, he saw the stern white face of Rafe Slaughter, who, with one finger on his lip, pointed with his other hand toward the spot where the arms of the sleeping Indians were placed ; then he whispered in the frontiersman's ear the single word, " Wait ! "

The figure glided away as silently as it had appeared. Brownell knew his companion to be as wise in wood-

craft as himself ; and without hesitation or doubt as to the result, placed his hand heavily on his shoulder. The action awakened the other, who turned his face, and seeing his companion with his hands untied, recognized that a change in their situation was impending, and merely moved his own arms to discover their condition. Satisfied on recognizing his freedom, he remained quietly waiting what should ensue.

What happened next was sufficiently startling.

Suddenly a small dark object flew through the air and fell in the midst of the burning logs.

The Indian, surprised, leaped to his feet, but not in time to insure even his own safety from what followed.

There was a terrific explosion, two or three dark figures could be seen flung upward, one of them at least falling back into the midst of the scattered and blazing logs, while wild yells of terror and dismay rang upon the night.

With the cunning of his craft, Brownell had discerned the nature of the extraordinary occurrence, and had succeeded, not only in himself and his immediate companion rolling out of the way, but had drawn Harde-man and Mike with him, while Indian John followed. They were all uninjured, save by a few falling embers.

To spring to his feet, rush through the blinding smoke to the tree where the arms were piled, was with Brownell the work of an instant. In this movement he was instinctively followed by the others.

Now, as the smoke cleared, the sharp crack of a rifle rang out upon the air, and the chief, who had gained

his feet, stunned by the explosion, but otherwise uninjured, threw up his arms and fell upon his face.

The other rifles were now in the hands of those who knew well how to wield them. Two more shots brought two of the savages to the ground. Of the remaining ones of the party, two were so badly injured by the burning logs that they were incapable of resistance. Two others sought safety in flight, but one of these being pursued by Mike, with his rifle clubbed in his hands, fell presently, stunned by a fearful blow from that weapon. The other, though followed by a shot from one of the Indians' rifles, which Hardeman had picked up after discharging his own, succeeded in escaping.

The whole transaction had not lasted over five minutes, and now the captives of so short a time before, stood wonder-stricken at their own changed position, gazing upon their deliverer.

"For God's sake, Rafe," exclaimed Hardeman, "how did you get here, and what magic have you used to create such a revolution?"

Rafe grasped the hand that was extended toward him by his friend, and shook it warmly.

"You might be sure," he said, "I would not let you be carried away, if there was a chance of saving you. I left the girls safe on the other side of the stream, and watched every movement that was made among you, and followed your trail to this point."

"But what means did you employ to produce such a terrific explosion?"

"Well, that was the result of a happy accident.

"Yesterday evening I was filling my powder-flask, and I accidentally put the canister, containing more than a pound of powder, into my pocket, where it had remained.

"The idea occurred to me as I lay in the bushes over there during the early part of the night, and chanced to feel the canister where it was—I thought I might produce a little excitement by its use, and after cutting the thongs that tied you all, I took off the cover of the canister and tossed the whole thing into the fire.

"The result, I will admit, went beyond my expectations."

"Well," said Mike, who had been an earnest listener to this account, "it takes a divil to catch a divil; and, bedad, I always thought there was some of the black art in you, Mr. Rafe—saving your prisence—and, be-gorra, now I knows it."

Rafe laughed, and slapped the Irishman on the shoulder, as he said:

"Well, Mike, whether it was the black art or not, I was well seconded by all of you, and you in particular did good work in bringing down that red rascal with the butt of your gun."

There was no longer any desire for sleep experienced by any of the party; and the suggestion from Rafe that they should immediately retrace their steps and rejoin the women, was willingly acceded to by the others.

"What will you do with these wounded Indians?" said Hardeman.

"Let them lay there," observed Brownell; "the other fellow will come back as soon as he finds we are gone, and they will be taken care of."

As the guide confirmed this opinion, the articles belonging to them, including the arms of the Indians and their ammunition, were speedily gathered together; and in a very few moments the whole party started on their return to the point where Maude and her companions had been left.

They traveled all night, and snatching a hasty mouthful in the morning, reached the scene of their former camp by the following noon.

They then forded the river, and, guided by Rafe, soon came up with the women, who had remained where he had placed them, carefully secluded in the midst of a pathless grove.

As they were little likely to be molested immediately, it was determined to remain where they were for that day and the following night, while they should form their plans as to their future movements.

Maude and Mademoiselle were, as might be imagined, delighted at the return of Rafe, and the knowledge of his complete success in his dangerous and dubious attempt to rescue his captive companions.

The story of the midnight attack was listened to by them with eager ears, and great was the praise which was lavished on the secretary for the skill and cunning as well as the audacity of his plan, and its mode of execution.

CHAPTER XVI.

Wherein the Reader is present at an interview between two important personages, and witnesses a very impressive and eventful and conclusive scene in the life of one of them.

ON one of those autumnal days, certain of whose events we have been chronicling, Stephen Roberts sat in his dingy old office in the little house on the main street of Hillsborough writing at his desk.

The time which had elapsed since we last presented him to the reader, had not seemingly told hardly with him ; although his iron-gray hair had turned a shade paler, and there might, perchance, have been a few more seams and lines in his pallid and impassive countenance.

It was in the afternoon, and although he was apparently engaged in writing, an observer would have concluded from his manner that his occupation did not fully engross his mind ; frequently he paused in his employment, not as one who reflects, observing what he is doing, but rather like a man whose mind is busy upon affairs foreign to his task.

There was the noise of a horse coming rapidly down the street, and which ceased in front of Stephen Roberts' door, and some one descended from the steed, it

bridle being taken by a negro boy who chanced to be at hand.

Then there was a sharp rap at the outer door, and then that of Stephen Roberts' office was opened briskly, to admit the burly and dignified form of Colonel Richard Anderson, Judge of the Superior Court of the province of North Carolina.

As Roberts looked up to acquaint himself with the personality of his visitor, a marked change came over his face.

Accustomed as that was to concealing the impressions of the mind which worked behind it, it was as though a curtain had been let fall over the intelligence which gleamed from the deep-sunken eyes of the Regulator, and rendered still more expressionless the mask which he wore.

Stephen Roberts did not, however, forget the customary courtesy of his demeanor; rising to his feet, and bowing profoundly before the majesty of that profession by which he purported to gain his living, he invited Judge Anderson to take a chair, and the latter having complied with the invitation, he resumed his own.

As the Judge had made no further remark than the usual formality of salutation, Roberts, after waiting a moment, said: "You are an unexpected visitor, Judge; I have not seen you for a long time, and I think never before in my office. May I ask what business I can do for you, or in what way I can serve you?"

The Judge, who was usually accustomed to display

rather a genial and even a jovial manner in his communion with his fellows, now looked stern and preoccupied, and as though his mind was impressed with weighty and not altogether agreeable matters. "No, Roberts," he said, "you never saw me in your office before, and I doubt if you may not possibly regret the necessity which brings me here at present."

The other made no answer except a bow. Imperturbable and implacable, it was plain that if this was to be a combat of wits and of wisdom, he would be found no mean antagonist.

"Stephen Roberts," began the Judge, after another slight pause, "for some reason, unknown to me, you have always hated me. I believe this has been under a misunderstanding, both of my nature and my actions; but whatever course I might once have pursued, had I deemed it fitting, to change your opinion regarding me, the time is past when I could consistently do so, and circumstances have occurred which render a frank explanation between us necessary to my immediate welfare, and your personal safety now and hereafter."

For all appearance of effect upon the hearer, these words might as well have been addressed to the dingy marble bust of Lord Lyttleton, which was the only ornament in the room, and appropriately surmounted a case of law books immediately behind Stephen Roberts' desk; he did not, however, let the words pass without comment.

"My safety, Judge Anderson?" he said inquiring.

ly; "I can not imagine how that can possibly be imperilled."

"You will learn," responded the other, coldly, 'before our present interview is concluded. I trust that your walls are of ordinary thickness, and that your doors are not accustomed to eavesdroppers."

Roberts flushed a little at this, but said simply: "You can speak as freely as you are now speaking"—and this was evidently said with a double meaning—"no one but myself will hear you."

"That is well," responded the Judge; "now I want to ask you—and I desire you to understand that for all questions I do ask, I have a sure foundation in facts known to me—I want to ask you why you organized the conspiracy which resulted in the abduction and confinement of Daniel Boone?"

"You are assuming a good deal," began Roberts—but he was interrupted, and the manner of his visitor became more imposing, as though indeed he were clothed in the judicial ermine, and preparing to sentence a condemned malefactor.

"As I told you a moment since, I assume nothing; and if you possess the wisdom and judgment I have always ascribed to you above most men of my acquaintance, you will at once abandon all child's play, and take this matter very seriously."

His words produced an astonishing effect upon his hearer. So peculiar was the change of appearance and demeanor which now came over Stephen Roberts that one could only have likened this to the preparation of

a serpent about to strike, or a wild and vicious animal standing at bay for the protection of its young.

“You are a man of your word, Judge Anderson, whatever else I may think of you ; and I am going to take you at it. I know that you would not have sought me personally for a conference of this character, if the purpose you had in view could have been effected to your equal satisfaction through the ordinary processes of the law. I am going to speak frankly to you, even though the trust I impose be that of my life itself.

“I did organize the expedition of which you speak, and which you might, perhaps, legally and appropriately term a conspiracy—though none of the other actors in it are now living. My reason for instigating and inaugurating it was briefly this : To oppose you in carrying out an object which I knew to be near to your heart, by delaying, at least, its conduct, through the removal of an instrument absolutely essential to its success.”

A flash, as of surprise, passed over Judge Anderson's face, as he heard this extraordinary explanation.

“To what purpose do you allude, and by what means did you become acquainted with it ?”

“The purpose in question was one which you are now conducting—I presume to a successful conclusion despite my efforts to prevent it ; it was and is, by the purchase of large tracts of land in the West, to establish new settlements, and draw from the population of this Colony ; and chiefly with the design of weakening

by such means, the organization of which I am proud to say I am an active member."

If Judge Anderson was surprised before, his looks expressed amazement now.

"But, Mr. Roberts," he said, "I can not understand how you have reached such a complete misconception of my purpose, nor how you have made it to assume an attitude inimical to the Regulators, with whose movement I know, of course, you are tied up body and soul."

"Judge Anderson, there is no sense in you and I bandying words without meaning in this matter; I am as you say, given up with all my power and ability, such as they are, to the cause of the oppressed of this Colony."

As the man said these words, and as he proceeded, his face became transfigured, and no one who gazed upon it would for a moment have doubted the fanatical belief and determination which actuated him.

"You are a Royalist official of high position and a Judge on the bench in the pay of the Crown. To you the condition of your fellow-creatures in the lower orders of society, can be of no interest—save as it becomes, from time to time, your duty to put them out of their misery by sending them to the prison cell or to execution."

"Great God!" cried the other, and he raised his hands, astounded at this definition of his character and nature.

Stephen Roberts paid no attention to the exclaima

tion, but went on. "But this outbreak, Judge Anderson, within the limits which confine it in this Colony, is a mere incident and a beginning, in its connection with what is now progressing elsewhere throughout these provinces, and which will finally, I tell you, culminate in a revolution.

"Yes, sir," he continued, and springing to his feet, he paced the floor of his little office—perhaps for the first time in his life rising to a state of excited feeling which was evidently genuine; "the people of these Colonies have been loyal to the King of England until loyalty is a crime; already, as my correspondence tells me, and yours ought to tell you, these people are aroused to a determination toward resistance against royalty, which will never end until they shall break off the yoke which now burdens and confines them—beyond the right of man or king to impose it.

"And I was not wrong, Judge Anderson, but clearly and certainly right in my judgment of this purpose of yours; that it was designed and is being carried out to still further weaken and embarrass those whose interests I have at heart. And whatever may come to me, I warrant you, that in the end you and those who with you serve a tyrannical monarch and his creatures, shall fall, crushed to the earth by the determined and just vengeance of an outraged people."

As he said these last words, Roberts returned to his seat, into which he sank exhausted with the excitement of his thoughts and his forcible declamation.

After the first few words which he had uttered, and

to which the Judge had listened with an expression of doubt and mystification in his face, the full sense of them seemed to come to him at once ; his countenance cleared, and he heard the remainder impassively, and as one who now held the key to the situation. When Roberts had ceased speaking, he said in a low tone, and in a voice which expressed emotion :

“ Roberts, I have misjudged you. I had taken you for a cold-blooded and murderous villain, and I perceive that you are only a misguided fanatic. So far are you from being correct in your views of me and of my actions, that you have really opposed one who is at heart the friend of the cause you advocate.

“ Now, I am going to put confidence in you, but I do not wish to do it in a way to mislead you ; I will say at the outset, that, despite your opinion to the contrary I have you completely in my power. How that has come to be the case, I shall, perhaps, explain to you before I leave you ; meanwhile, in justice to yourself, I may add, that it is probable, after what you have said, and with my now altered judgment concerning your motives, I would place the same confidence in you even were the circumstances not as I have indicated.

“ I agree with you fully in all you have asserted in regard to the condition of the people of these Colonies ; and my impressions and convictions are the same as yours concerning the cruelties, exactions, and infamous extortions which have been practiced on this people by the King and his advisers. I also agree with you as to the revolutionary condition now near to being precipi-

tated in consequence ; furthermore, my correspondence which is probably more extensive and more exact than yours, places me in the possession of facts that more than bear you out in your statement.

“And now I will give you the exact truth in regard to my undertaking, and which is not known to any except those concerned in it with me.

“It is, in fact, looking forward to such a revolution as that of which you have spoken, to establish on the lands which we contemplate purchasing, a new territory, whose government shall be Republican and subject to no King.

“So far has this purpose progressed that the form of government is already drawn up, and even the name and political designation of the territory concluded upon.

“The Republic of Transylvania exists to-day or paper, and will exist a few years hence, *de facto*.’ The Judge ceased speaking, and the effect of his declaration was at once manifest and emphatic.

Rising, Stephen Roberts stepped forward and extended his hand. The other took it, though with manifest unwillingness.

“Judge, I said you was a man of your word, and I trust what you have told me implicitly.” Withdrawing his hand, he passed it over his brow for a moment, and as he sat down he staggered ; he was silent for an instant, and when he spoke, it was in a voice husky and shaken with strong feeling.

“Judge—I have—done you a great wrong—but—I

have done myself a greater. Under the influence of my error—I have committed crimes myself—and instigated others——Good God," he cried aloud, while the perspiration ran down his cheeks—"Even now, for aught I know, still another crime is being added to the category of those which I have occasioned, and for which I now suffer bitterly."

"What do you mean?" asked the Judge earnestly.

"I will tell you, before you leave ; but now my mind is shaken to bewilderment by many serious thoughts."

After a pause of some moments, he resumed : "Judge, what did you mean by telling me you had me in your power?"

"Stephen Roberts, after what you have said, and with the picture of remorse and feeling which you exhibit before me, I can not find it in my heart to disclose this horrible secret."

"Tell it, Judge, tell it," cried the other ; and with his head bowed over his desk upon his hands, "I half suspect what it is, and would rather have it over now and with you than bear further suspense and probably discovery at last."

"Well, if you will have it," said the Judge, "I will disclose it to you, but prepare yourself for a fearful shock."

Drawing from an inner pocket of his coat a small wallet he carefully abstracted from it a piece of paper ; opening this he said : "On the 31st of December, 1768, you visited the house in the woods where Daniel Boone had been confined ; there you found the man-

gled remains of the men who had been your instruments in his abduction; their dead bodies lay about the floor in various positions, a horrible and memorable sight."

Roberts had gradually removed his hands from before his face, and was now looking straight at the Judge, and listening eagerly; at the words "dead bodies," a sudden gleam, as almost of hope, lightened his face for a single instant.

"But," continued the Judge, "you found that two of these wretched creatures were not yet dead;—and, so help me God! Stephen Roberts,"—and rising, he pushed his chair back, and stood sternly gazing on the cowering wretch before him, while, raising his right hand in the air, he continued:—"Instead of succoring those two miserable victims of your blind error, you shot them both to death; and—Stephen Roberts—may God have mercy on your soul!"

As he said these words the Judge strode to the window, and stood apparently looking out; but in fact, vainly striving to conceal the emotion that shook his rugged frame to the core.

There was dead silence in the room; only a convulsive movement of the form which was now bowed in agony, showed the powerful effort that the man was making to repress the sobs which seemed ready to burst from his tightly-closed lips.

Starting suddenly, Judge Anderson approached the desk, where he stood confronting Roberts like an accusing angel.

"Why did you do it?" he cried. "Why did you do it?—an act so dastardly, so cruel, so unnecessary."

"No, not unnecessary," burst forth the other; "it was everything else that was fiendish and horrible, I admit; but at the moment it seemed essential to the safety of my own life; not that I prized that for itself, for I did not, nor do I now; far less now than ever, God knows; but for the cause in which I am engaged. But there is one sin of mine with which you have not charged me, and of which perhaps you are not even aware at this moment."

"And what is that, in heaven's name?"

"It was I, Judge Anderson, who burned your place; at least it was by my orders and under my personal supervision that it was done.

"But to return. Those two men whom I murdered—for I admit it—driven by an impulse which I could not combat, but which does not seem to me to have been the desire for self-preservation merely;—those two men were my actual confederates and instruments in the abduction of Boone; and that might in the end have concluded in his destruction. Defeated in carrying out my immediate purpose, and knowing that these men had my life in their power, and were certain to at least make it forever after a burden to me, and render me useless to the great cause I had espoused, it came upon me like a flash of intuition that they must be gotten rid of."

"But supposing," said the Judge, "that your plot had been successful and Boone had not been re-capt-

ured—would you not have been equally in the power of these men?”

“No,” replied the other, “because in that case, and with Boone disposed of—and he would either have been transferred across the seas, or murdered—we would have all been in the same boat, and would have had to sink or swim together.

“Mind you, Judge, I am not attempting to palliate my conduct; that would not be possible. A lifetime of remorse and expiation could never atone for what I have done. I am only explaining to you, honestly and truly, the reasons that actuated me.

“But now, for God’s sake, Judge Anderson, tell me how it was possible for you to discover the truth as to this act?”

The Judge still held the piece of paper which he had drawn from his wallet; unfolding it he extended it between his two hands before the eyes of Stephen Roberts, who read upon it, while his eyeballs seemed starting from their sockets at this message from the graves of his victims, these words:

“If our bodies are found with any signs of death upon them but bruises and the effects of starvation, that infernal blood-thirsty villain, Stephen Roberts, will have killed us; murdered us in cold blood.”

“WILLIAM BUTLER.

“CHARLES CLEEVES.”

“Those two men,” said the Judge, sternly, as he re-

stored the paper to his wallet, "were found with a bullet hole through each of their skulls."

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With nerveless hands shaking in the air, and with his face distorted with fear and horror, Stephen Roberts took into his mind this evidence of the sin that had found him out at last.

The strain was too great for overwrought humanity to bear.

As the Judge stood, heart-stricken, but powerless to avert the result of his fearful judgment on the criminal before him, a power beyond and above all mortal judges carried the sentence of the Divine law into effect.

There was a writhing movement, as the poor wretch strove to rise erect. The head was raised, and the mouth opened; but from it proceeded no sound. Suddenly the face was surcharged and blackened with a rush of blood from the broken heart; a gurgling sound was heard in the throat; and then with a sudden gasp that was almost a shriek of mortal agony, the tall frame of the man rose to its full height, swayed backward and forward for an instant, and then fell prone upon the floor.

Recovering himself at this unexpected and tragical conclusion, Judge Anderson knelt by the side of what had been Stephen Roberts, and turning the body over placed his hands upon his heart; blood was running from his mouth, and no pulsation throbbed in answer to the pressure of the Judge's hand—the man was dead.

Rising, the Judge opened the door, and hurrying

through the house he called for assistance; and to members of the family who appeared in answer to his cries he stated that the lawyer had fallen in a fit of apoplexy.

There were sorrowing and outcries and lamentations. A physician was sent for, and the final decision was given.

Stephen Roberts was dead.

Leaving the grief-stricken family, with such words of commiseration as occurred to him, Judge Anderson mounted his horse and rode to the tavern, where he was to put up for the night; and where he immediately retired to his room, crushed and broken by the recollection of the fearful scene of which he had been a witness.

CHAPTER XVII.

Judge Anderson works out a serious problem in abstract reasoning to a correct conclusion, through an incorrect process.

DURING all that night, Judge Anderson remained in his room at the tavern.

The excitement of the day had so affected him, that though a man of strong nerve, and but little impressible by even the most grave and terrible contingencies—of which, in his official position, he necessarily met with many—there was yet something so appalling in the sudden prostration (seemingly by the hand of God) of this man, steeped in crime, that he could not contemplate the subject with equanimity.

In all his judicial experience, the Judge had never met with a case of crimes of such magnitude, and in such number, being committed under misapprehension, and without personal interest or intention.

Knowing Stephen Roberts as he did, he easily recognized the fact that his consistent and profound interest in the cause which he had at heart had rendered him a fanatic, and incompetent to discern between right and wrong in cases where that cause was concerned.

He perceived, also, that the terrible murder committed by him of the two unfortunate men in the log-house in the woods, was, as he had alleged, actuated

rather by the feeling that his life was valuable to the Revolution which was impending, than from any personal regard for it.

The manner in which Judge Anderson had been brought to a knowledge of this secret, seemingly buried with the dead, was as follows :

When the party which had gone out from Hillsborough to bury the remains of the victims of the tragedy in the log-house had reached the fatal spot, one of their number, in removing the skeletons to their burial-place, had found beside the body of Butler the earthen pipkin which Roberts had used to give water to the two men in their famishing condition. In this pipkin he discovered the piece of paper which Judge Anderson had shown to Roberts.

Being unable to read, and rightly concluding that this paper might contain information of importance, he had kept the discovery to himself, and the paper in his possession, until he returned to Hillsborough, when he gave it to Judge Anderson, who, on inquiry, learned of the condition in which the two men had been found. The Judge, although horrified at the contents of this paper, had made no comment upon it, treating it as an unimportant matter, but recommending the man who gave it to him to say nothing about it—an injunction which had been strictly kept.

Judge Anderson had also, with a view to the prosecution of the matter at the proper time, when measures could be taken to effect this with the most certainty, and with care that justice should be done, had up to

this time made no public exposure of the knowledge concerning the crime in his possession.

The death of Stephen Roberts was a severe blow to the Regulators.

He was a man of profound ability and capacity for organization, and seemingly formed for just such a purpose as the inauguration and conduct of a plot like that in which he had been engaged. And this was not the only blow which the cause of the Regulators had suffered in the year which we are now considering.

In the spring of that year Governor Tryon had combined a large body of militia and volunteers, and on May 15th he crossed the Great Alamance River with a force one thousand strong, and fought a battle with the Regulators, who were two thousand in number. The latter were defeated, losing about twenty dead and several hundred wounded, while sixty-one of the militia were either wounded or killed during the engagement.

After this defeat, the leaders were tried and executed, except such as managed to escape and fled from the Colony. Stephen Roberts, however, had covered his tracks, and was a man of much importance in the community, and one, moreover, against whom there seemed to be no direct evidence sufficient to justify his indictment, and he had, up to the period of his death, been permitted to go free from restraint, though suspected and closely watched.

An inquest on his remains was held on the day following his death, and at which, of course, Judge Ander

son was a prominent witness. The Judge's testimony had been framed in his mind with a due sense of all the grave interests involved. His evidence was simple, and to the effect that, having been engaged in a business interview with the deceased, the latter had, during its continuance, displayed considerable excitement of manner, evincing a great deal of mental and physical disturbance. Toward the close of the interview this condition had suddenly increased; he had been overcome by an apoplectic fit, and had fallen instantly and expired.

After the inquest and the funeral, Judge Anderson returned to his seat at Granville, where his new mansion was now completed and suitably furnished, as he had indicated to be his intention in his conversation with Rafe and Harry more than two years before.

Here, in the seclusion of his study, he was able to give a more clear and dispassionate consideration to the substance of his interview with Roberts than had been before possible.

In reviewing this, he was reminded that the Regulator had intimated to him, in one of his sudden bursts of passionate declaration, that one of his many crimes was still in process of being carried out. But as to this, as will be remembered, he had deferred the explanation, and the opportunity for again considering it had been lost by the catastrophe which ended in his death.

The Judge now bent his mind to an endeavor to discover, though without clue as he was, the nature and meaning of this declaration, so far as it went, and of the crime which it had intimated.

Such a problem was one which would have sorely taxed the ingenuity of the ablest lawyer or logician ; but Judge Anderson's intellect was keen and acute, sharpened by profound study and long practice in analyzing the acts and motives of men under different conditions ; and though he approached the subject with diffidence, in doubt of his own powers, he was not entirely without a hope that the key to the enigma might eventually be reached.

By reasoning backward, he concluded, in the first instance, that this crime must have been in some way connected with himself, or that it had reference to persons or interests in which he was concerned, or Roberts would not have alluded to it in conversation with him. He drew this reasonable inference from the fact that the murder of the two men, for instance, was not mentioned between them until he had himself alluded to it ; that murder being a matter personal to Stephen Roberts, and having no connection with himself.

Thus reasoning, he had narrowed the circumference of possibilities in regard to this crime to a limit within which he could more readily handle it. He now proceeded to reduce this limit still more, by bringing before his mind the names of persons connected with himself and in whom he was interested, who might have possibly come in contact or conflict with Stephen Roberts.

A very slight reviewal of this side of the question, suggesting one name after the other, each in turn being dismissed as impossible or improbable in that connec-

tion, presently brought to his mind the memory of an interview held between Harry Calvert and Roberts in regard to the abduction of Boone, and which had been recounted to him by Calvert himself, during the relation of the expedition for Boone's recapture.

This interview, in itself, had only illustrated the character of Roberts, his skill of fence, and his determination to keep secret his connection with Boone's capture and imprisonment.

In striving to connect with this all the circumstances surrounding it, with a view to bringing these occurrences closer home to himself, the Judge was reminded of the fact that Calvert at that time had been accompanied to Hillsborough by the others of his party, including Rafe Slaughter. These he knew had been left behind at the tavern, while Calvert and Mike had proceeded, each in his several attempt at obtaining information concerning the object of their quest.

While cogitating on all these personages and incidents, his mind naturally reverted incidentally to the object of Calvert's journey to Baltimore. This, also, caused him to reflect on the disinheritance of the young man and the nature of the will, with whose purport he had been made acquainted.

Unconsciously, almost, he found himself drifting into a legal analysis of the provisions of that instrument. The strange and unexpected course of the old uncle in disinheriting his favorite nephew, and disposing of the bulk of his estate in the direction of one whom he had never esteemed, and whose reputation was unsavory

this, with the proviso, that if, after seven years, the legal heir should not have appeared, the property was to revert to the one who, in all justice, ought to have it. All of this did not fail to interest and puzzle the mind of the lawyer and judge when he first heard it.

Why the whole question should re-form itself in his mind at this juncture, when he so fully desired to occupy it with other thoughts, disturbed and surprised him. It was one of those strange psychological movements that sometimes occur, by a natural order of things, in answer to a positive law of analogies, though in defiance of our preconceived intention and even of our will.

The Judge was a deep thinker, and accustomed to view the characteristics of mental movement with great respect. In the present instance he could not but think that there was something in this connection in his mind, of matters apparently foreign to the question he had in hand, that must import something suggestive, if he could only discover it. Suddenly, as if by a flash of intuition, a key was given to him.

The Judge was well aware of the fact that Stephen Roberts, who knew everything that happened in his own town and neighborhood, not only almost instinctively, but from the fact that he had always emissaries about to keep him informed, must have known of the presence of Calvert's companions at the tavern.

He had met Rafe Slaughter, and knew him to be attached to Judge Anderson's household as the latter's confidential secretary and agent. With his conceded

hatred of the Judge, he would naturally be inimical to any one closely connected with him, and would not hesitate to do injury to the Judge through his agent.

Besides, Roberts would readily understand that whatever direction was to be given to Boone in regard to his expedition, would be given through Rafe Slaughter, acting for the Judge, and sent out to join Boone undoubtedly for that purpose.

The success of Harry and his companions in discovering Boone's place of confinement and releasing him ; the after-prosecution of the enterprise as originally intended, by all the parties who had originated it—all of this, he was aware, was well known to Stephen Roberts.

The fact that the parties had moved separately, owing to the accidental delay of Rafe and Harry, was not known to Roberts, so far as he was aware. He had himself been informed of it by a letter which Rafe had sent to him shortly before Harry Calvert had started into the woods on the track of Boone:

All of these facts passed rapidly through his mind, and the Judge jumped to the conclusion that the fresh crime which Stephen Roberts had instigated and probably set in motion, was nothing less than the destruction of Rafe Slaughter ; or, at least, the gaining possession of whatever valuable papers he might carry about him having relation to the settlement and organization of the country of Transylvania.

It will be observed by the reader that Judge Anderson had by this time lost sight of the impression which

had so strongly affected him, that Harry Calvert's fortunes were in some way mixed up with this crime.

A more natural conclusion, that the occasion of such action on the part of Stephen Roberts would be his personal enmity to Judge Anderson, had driven out an idea, which, if it had been more carefully adhered to and scrutinized, would have brought about a more correct solution. Although the after-results proved to be the same, the real facts in the case were more complicated ; as will be seen when the nature of the conflicting motives which had actuated Stephen Roberts in his course shall be made known to the reader, as they afterward were to Judge Anderson.

At present it is not necessary, and would be subversive of one of the designs in the plot of this narrative, to relate them ; and besides which, as has been suggested, there were apparently two roads out of the difficulty, and Judge Anderson had fortunately chosen one of them.

The conclusion which he had reached assumed at once to the Judge the force of an actuating motive.

He conceived that his secretary and friend was in danger from the vengeance which reached out to take his life—even after the instigator of the act had passed away to render his own account for much wrong-doing.

While he was aware, that even now he might be too late, the Judge was not a man to let that possibility interfere with what he clearly saw to be his duty. He determined at once to set forth in search of Rafe Slaughter ; and supposing that the latter had succeeded

by this time in joining Boone, he desired, moreover, to expedite the prime objects of the expedition by his own personal presence and intervention.

The Judge set about this matter at once, by communicating with the Governor of the Province, informing him that important business would require his absence from his seat probably for several months. Having made this formal announcement, he required no permission to leave his official duties for the time required; since these he could readily depute to another.

The Judge now proceeded in his preparations, and in a few days had set forth from his seat properly accompanied, and provided for all possible exigencies of the undertaking.

CHAPTER XVIII.

in which the hapless condition of Squire and Lady O'Brien offers a lesson of charity and patience ; and the Squire, himself, concludes that he is being involved in the meshes of a network of mystery.

WE will return now for a brief space to the family at Mount Mourne, which had been so seriously reduced by the defection of the party whom we left in the wilds of Kentucky.

The mental condition of the Squire and his Lady after the departure of Maude, was for a time pitiable to witness. As we have said, the guests who had been present at the Christmas festivities described in a previous chapter, had all taken their departure, leaving the family reduced to these two and their little son ; and the great house was comparatively empty.

This condition continued during the following winter, and the deserted couple had ample time for reflection on the result of their severity ; and, as may be supposed, such reflection was not calculated to restore them to anything like equanimity of mind or placidity of temper. For a time the affair brought about a coolness between the Squire and Lady O'Brien ; but this could hardly be of long duration. Her Ladyship was too shrewd a woman, and had too long managed and

controlled her husband, to permit any matter, however serious, to permanently alienate him.

After the first few days, and the excitement of the sudden and unexpected change of affairs, these two conferred very little concerning them. It was tacitly admitted between them that they were both immediately to blame; and as but little, if any, advantage could result to either from recrimination, they soon fell into their customary attitude with regard to each other.

The Squire, however, felt the loss of Maude far more deeply than did his wife. He loved Maude devotedly, and with a tenderness that only a father can feel toward a daughter. For it is a fact, that however much affection a mother may experience for a girl child who is born to her, whom she educates and trains under her own eye, who recalls to her mind her own childhood and girlhood—yet there is, always, as the daughter advances in years, a feeling of antagonism in the mind of her mother: a jealousy of her years and her growing charms which goes far to do away with maternal affection.

As the reader will have easily concluded in considering the attitude assumed by Lady O'Brien toward her daughter, as described to some slight extent in the course of this story, there had been but very little consideration shown to the latter.

Maude had bloomed into womanhood, with a degree of beauty and intelligence which made her a favorite with all those who visited at her father's house. **This**

fact was not calculated to improve her position in the mind and regard of her mother.

Lady O'Brien was a woman possessed of decided self-esteem, which had been fostered in her younger days by the attentions which she had received in the best circles of Europe. She was now in the prime of life, still very handsome, being stately and imposing in her manner and carriage, and it was not surprising that a tinge of jealousy should have entered into her conduct in regard to one who actually assumed, though not with design, a position in society which might be considered in rivalry with her own.

And although Maude was of a sweet and gentle disposition, and rarely came into collision with anybody it could hardly be expected that her relations to Lady O'Brien should not have reacted upon her regard for her mother, and to some extent upon her conduct. It will certainly be conceded that these relations might well have exercised some influence, in actuating the girl to take the important step which she had done.

Having taken this step, Lady O'Brien, while missing her, and in some ways regretting the difference between them, soon experienced a feeling of relief; while her pride prevented her from showing even the little sentiment of remorse and sorrow which oppressed her.

But with the Squire it was quite different; his feeling for the girl, of whom he had always made a pet, and in later years a companion, would not permit him to forget her even for a moment. The loss of her sunny presence threw a gloom about him, that he felt bitterly

Gradually as the months passed by he seemed to visibly grow older, and a care-worn expression came over his genial countenance. He devoted himself more than ever to the duties of his estate, and although Lady O'Brien, early in the spring, insisted on extending invitations, and receiving and entertaining guests through the summer, when this part of North Carolina was pleasanter than other sections, the Squire interested himself but very little in her plans, and appeared but seldom among those who visited them.

An exception was made by him, however, in the case of the good rector, Dr. Bullock: who was frequently at the great house, and between whom and the Squire there was a closer acquaintance, and even friendship, than the latter permitted with any other.

The first year passed away without any incident of importance marking the domestic life at Mount Mourne. The absent one was now seldom mentioned between the Squire and his wife.

Through Thomas Hardeman's family, word then came of the interference, by accident, with the original plans of Rafe Slaughter and Harry Calvert; of the departure of the latter without his friends to follow the trail of Boone; and after this there was a long silence. Then the news reached them—in the summer of 1771—that the remainder of the party had gone out with a guide to endeavor to find both Boone and Harry; and this seemingly reckless and even foolish action on the part of Maude and Mademoiselle Raimonde, brought the whole subject once more before the Squire and his wife.

The latter could hardly find words sufficiently strong to effectually characterize her daughter's boldness in venturing upon such a procedure as she had undertaken.

"The audacity of the girl!" she cried, in one of their conversations; "to think that one apparently so modest as she, and brought up under the wholesome restraint and discipline of a respectable family, should go off with two young men tramping through the woods, with the admitted purpose of hunting up her lover! If it had been her husband, it would be bad enough; putting aside the danger, which everybody who knows anything about it says is extreme, not alone from Indians, but from wild beasts and reptiles as well—putting that out of the question, the immodesty of such conduct in *my* daughter is something that I can not understand."

The emphasis which Lady O'Brien put upon the pronoun *my*, showed very clearly that her Ladyship would not have been surprised at any action of the nature she described in anybody else's daughter, but felt a right to be astounded that her instruction and her direction should have so soon and so thoroughly lost its influence in the present instance.

"But, my dear," the Squire ventured to remark, "your way of putting the case a little exaggerates it."

"How so?"

'Why, in the first place, she did not go off with two young men, for Rafe Slaughter is old enough to be her father. I am sure I would trust her with him anywhere, if only on account of the credentials he brought

from my friend Dick Anderson ; and as for Thomas Hardeman, they have been playmates from childhood, and I would as soon think wrong of her for going off with her own brother, if she had been so fortunate as to be blessed with one old enough, as I would with him.

"And again," he continued, "you allude to this expedition as if Maude went off unaccompanied by any female ; the fact being, as you well know, that Mademoiselle Raimonde is with her, who has had charge of her from infancy ; and that Rose is there, to afford such practical comfort as an experienced and attached servant could give under such circumstances."

"Mademoiselle Raimonde," observed her Ladyship, always struck me as a woman of sense. And although I know very well that she had a romantic phase in her character, which probably only wanted an opportunity for development, I never did think that she would assist in such a wild escapade as this. It sounds like the absurdities one sometimes hears of in a French boarding-school, but which never, however, come to anything but talk.

"But I am surprised that you, who profess to love Maude so much more than I do, can calmly contemplate such a situation as this in which she has placed herself. Why, ever since I heard of it I can hardly sleep ; my dreams are all of Indians, bears, and snakes. Often I awake with a cold perspiration pouring off me, imagining and almost seeing her pursued by those frightful savages."

The Squire answered nothing to this. In truth, his own case was very much like that described, but probably never experienced by Lady O'Brien. The fact being that the possible fate of his daughter at the hands of the savage tribes, which he very well knew infested the country she was in, was a feature of the whole affair that never left him, and cost him many moments of bitter anguish and regret.

The Squire found his greatest comfort in conversations with the rector.

Dr. Bullock was a man who had long been on the frontier, and who had often, to some extent, ministered among the Indian tribes themselves, in places remote from the white settlements. He was familiar with their habits and their modes of thought.

At this time the old bitterness and exasperation against the whites, which had so often driven the Indians to commit terrible enormities, had in a considerable measure died away, and, meanwhile, its renewal, so far as the Colonists were concerned, and which occurred a few years later under the instigation of British agents, had not yet begun to exist. It had, indeed, been a long time since any serious difficulties had occurred between the two races, particularly in the province of North Carolina and its borders.

"Except when the Indians are actually at war with the whites," said Dr. Bullock, one day when the two were discussing this question, "and unless some specific offence has been committed against them, they are not inclined to proceed to extremities even with their cap-

tives. It is not as it was one hundred years ago, when their first thought was of murder and outrage. The Indians have found that they can get on much better, and improve their own condition more decidedly, by keeping on passably good terms with the whites, than by antagonizing them.

“Our traders, as you know, Squire, especially the Scotch, have penetrated the southwest clear to New Orleans, buying peltries and exchanging them in the settlements for fire-arms, ammunition, and, I regret to say, ‘fire-water.’ This sort of association has awakened the most savage tribes to an understanding that they can best obtain what they most need, by keeping on good terms with those who could provide them.

“It is a very long time since you and I have heard of any outrages committed by Indians, except on each other; and my own impression is, that even if some of them who are on the war-path should capture our friends, it would only be with the design and result of claiming a suitable compensation for their release.

“Besides, as I understand it, they have a good guide, a peaceable Indian; and as he will be well paid, he will use all his skill to carry them safely through. Then, of course, they must ultimately find Boone and his companions and Harry Calvert. A party so large as they would then become, would, I suspect, be secure against any ordinary attack.”

“What you say is very consoling,” observed the Squire, “and I do not see but what it is reasonable. At all events, it can not now be many weeks before we

shall hear from them, as I understand Boone's brother, having succeeded in overtaking him, returned to obtain ammunition and other things which he required, and has again gone out in search of him. What he could venture to do alone, and could succeed in doing, it does seem to me as if our friends might also accomplish."

The conversation which we have related took place early in the Fall of 1771, while the two were riding about the estate; the Squire giving directions to his hands, from time to time, as he met them, and generally overlooking the crops and the progress of his farming operations.

Having concluded what was necessary in this direction for the day, the two gentlemen turned, and directed their horses' steps toward the house, slowly ambling along, and continuing to speak on the subject which was uppermost in the minds of both of them.

They had crossed the bridge and entered the drive, when their attention became directed toward a movement on the piazza, which seemed to signify the arrival of strangers. Lady O'Brien could be seen, with several of the persons who were visiting her standing about, she being apparently engaged in conversation with a poorly-dressed woman who was seated on the piazza steps, and had by her side a young boy.

As the Squire and Dr. Bullock rode up to the piazza, her Ladyship called out to her husband:

"I am glad you have come; something has occurred about which I want to consult you."

The two gentlemen dismounted, and their horses

being led around to the stable by one of the boys about the place, both drew near to the group on the piazza. The woman rose from her sitting posture and bowed to the gentlemen, and Lady O'Brien, who held what appeared to be a letter in her hand, said :

"This woman's name is Brownell, and this is her son. She has traveled fifteen miles to-day on foot to bring this letter, which has been sent from Hillsborough, and is addressed to her husband. It appears from what she says, that her husband set out recently, with the intention of going into the woods, and announcing that he meant to find Daniel Boone and his companions, and join them in their exploration, about which he had heard down in Hillsborough. Having understood that some of our friends were with Boone's party, although in that she is mistaken"—

"Not necessarily so," interrupted the Squire.

Lady O'Brien paid no attention to this remark, but went on :

"She has come here to endeavor to learn by what means this letter, which is marked 'important,' and 'in haste,' could be forwarded to her husband. I presume you will like to talk to her, and I will turn her over to your hands."

Accordingly, Lady O'Brien gave the letter in question to the Squire, and turning on her heels, dropped the subject, and joined her guests, a little piqued at the dissent which her husband had expressed from her doubt with regard to the possible union of Daniel Boone and the party in search of him.

The Squire, as was natural to him, first devoted himself to the consideration of the probable condition of Mrs. Brownell, after her long and wearisome journey.

"You must be tired and hungry," he said to her, kindly. "I will have one of the maids take you around to the kitchen, where you can get something to eat, and can rest yourself; and after you feel thoroughly recruited, send word to me, and I will be glad to see you. In the meantime, I will take charge of this letter."

The woman expressed her thanks, and the Squire, calling one of the negro girls, sent her with her son to be taken care of by the butler.

The Squire now proceeded to his chamber to dress for dinner; having concluded which, he went to the library, where he was presently informed by the servant that Mrs. Brownell had eaten a substantial meal, and was now rested, and ready to await his pleasure. He accordingly sent for her, and on her entering the library, courteously offered her a seat.

"This letter is from Hillsborough, you say," he observed, lifting it from the table before him, and looking at the superscription.

"Yes, sir, and I think I know who it is from."

"That is none of my business," began the Squire, but he was interrupted by the woman, who proceeded.

"It is no secret, sir. I am quite sure the letter is from Stephen Roberts, a lawyer in Hillsborough, that my husband has had a great deal to do with in the last two or three years—more, indeed, than I think has been good for him."

"I have heard of this Stephen Roberts," observed the Squire; "he is suspected of being one of an organization called Regulators, I believe; but so far as I know this has never been proved, and he bears the reputation of being a man of ability, with nothing particular against him."

"He has got ability enough; but as to there being nothing agin him, I ain't so sure; anyhow, he has got my husband under his thumb, so that the man has neglected his farm, and left us to pull along the best way we can, and it is hard enough, I assure you, while he is goin' over the country doin' the biddin' of this Stephen Roberts. I never saw the man, but I don't like him any the better for that."

"Well," said the Squire, "I am sorry that you have reason to think he has been the cause of any injury to you; though as I don't know your husband, I can't tell whether he can not be to blame himself."

"That is all right, Squire; William never was much of a farmer, but he was a good-hearted man, and worked around pretty well until he got in with them Regulators and this man Roberts. Since then he has been good for little or nothin'. He gets money, though what for, I don't know, and don't care to know; it is for no good, I will wager; but there is very little sight of his money me and his children gets. He spends the most of it where he gets it, down in Hillsborough, drinking and carousing at the tavern with them Regulators; who might better regulate themselves, than try to set the world straight."

"Very well, my good woman," said the Squire, as a pause in her voluble speech gave him an opportunity, "in what way can I serve you at present?"

"Well, sir, you see William has had letters from Stephen Roberts before, and I know he is awful particular about them, and generally they tell him to start off on some expedition or other. I don't vally Stephen Roberts' orders a pin's worth, but if my William should miss gettin' one of them he would be rearing mad, and he ain't altogether a comfortable man to get along with when he is in that condition. So when I hearn tell that your daughter and some of your folks had gone off after this Mr. Daniel Boone, I concluded that you might have some way of sending this letter to my husband, s'posin' that he had jined them."

"Do you suppose that to be the case?" asked the Squire.

"Well, yes," she replied, hesitatingly; "if he is gone after Boone or anybody else in the woods, he will come up to him. There ain't no better backwoodsman around these parts than William Brownell, if I do say it."

"You say *if* he has gone after Boone. Have you any doubts about it?"

"Well, I hev, and I hevn't. You see, Squire, when William is attendin' to these things about the Regulators, he ain't altogether probable to speak the truth, if he is questioned, and as a rule I don't question him. Then it seems to me as if Stephen Roberts ought to know where he is, most as well and perhaps better as I

would, cos he has had the directing of him for a long time. Still Roberts may hev sent him off himself, and there might be some mistake about the time of his goin'."

The Squire looked surprised. "What would this man Roberts send your husband out to join Boone for?" he asked.

"Well, that is what I don't know; but I hev heard William name the two together a good many times, and I hev heard him speak of Judge Anderson in the same breath. So I kind of put the three together; but I am nothing but an or'nary woman, and can not conclude on these matters as you can."

The Squire was silent for a moment, while he reflected.

There seemed to be something like a mystery in all this, and if there was any one thing that Squire O'Brien hated more than another, it was mystery.

While it might well be that Boone's connection with Judge Anderson had got noised about in Hillsborough, he could not understand why it should be a matter of interest to Stephen Roberts, whom he knew to be not only a man of ability, as he had said, but also shrewd, calculating, and uncompromising in his conduct of any operation he took in hand.

He had also understood, though he had not cared to express this opinion to Mrs. Brownell, that Roberts was not altogether faultless in his character, nor entirely unconnected with the serious troubles which had been originated by the Regulators. He remembered, too,

against him the suspicions formed by Harry Calvert, as to his possible complication with the abduction of Boone. Altogether, he began to suspect that this connection of Brownell and Roberts, and of both together, with Boone, and with his own daughter and friends, were matters of serious importance, and would bear grave consideration.

After a moment's thought his mind was made up for the present, and turning to Mrs. Brownell, he said :

"Well, my good woman, I will take the responsibility of keeping this letter, if you have no objection, and will try and forward it to your husband. I think that before long, if we do not hear something of our friends who have gone out in search of Daniel Boone, I shall go myself or send somebody out to discover the facts with regard to the safety of my daughter."

The woman rose, and heaving a sigh as if of relief, said :

"I am sure, sir, that it is very kind in you to take care of the letter and to give yourself so much trouble. I am glad to get rid of the thing, for it has been fretting me most to death ever since I got it, which will be a week to-morrow. You see it took me some time to fix things so that I might leave."

"Very well," said the Squire, "we will consider this matter settled, then ; you will stay here to-night, and in the morning I will send one of the men to take you home in a wagon."

The woman flushed at this evidence of kindness on the part of the Squire, and her eyes filled with tears

Grasping his extended hand she pressed it warmly in her own, at the same time thanking him for saving her the labor and time involved in undertaking on foot her long journey home.

Mrs. Brownell was accordingly taken care of for the rest of the day and night, and on the following morning was sent off in accordance with the promise of the Squire; she and her son being driven away in a wagon in charge of one of the negroes about the place.

CHAPTER XIX.

In which Judge Anderson and Squire O'Brien conclude to go West to look after their several interests ; and the Reader is permitted to assist at the discussion of a communication which recalls the suggestion that "the evil that men do lives after them."

THE mystery which Squire O'Brien dimly discerned in his latest adventure—the arrival of Mrs. Brownell at the great house, and the purport of her mission—this waxed more mysterious still, as the Squire gave it such examination as he might. So important a place did it at length assume in his mind, that he decided, despite the present mood of Lady O'Brien, to confer with her concerning it. He accordingly availed himself of the first opportunity and opened the question to her.

Lady O'Brien listened quietly to his relation of his conversation with Mrs. Brownell. Having absorbed all the information that was to be had, she calmly declined to entertain the question in any aspect, saying as she did so :

" I shall leave Mistress Maude and her affairs in your hands ; I wash mine of both."

This interview between the Squire and his wife, which, as may be judged, was a very brief one, had taken place on the afternoon of the day of Mrs. Brownell's departure homeward, in the drawing-room, where the

two chanced to meet. After his wife had left the room, the Squire stood before the window cogitating, when he observed three travelers on horseback coming up the road toward the house.

After watching them for a moment, and not discovering who they were, the Squire went out on the piazza to meet them. As they drew near he seemed to recognize the foremost cavalier, a stout, fine-looking gentleman, and in a few moments he discovered that this was no other than his old friend Judge Anderson.

Hastening to greet and welcome one whom he liked so much, and for whom he felt such profound respect he was received no less cordially by the Judge, who, introducing his two companions, younger men than himself, as friends from Granville County, alighted, and the three were invited by the Squire into the drawing-room.

Préparations for entertaining the new-comers were at once ordered, though Judge Anderson deprecated any extra trouble on his account, declaring that he could only remain for a brief time, and that he had come to see the Squire on business of some importance.

He and his friends were, however, introduced to Lady O'Brien and her guests, and all three were at once made to promise that they would remain over at least for one or two days.

At the first opportunity the Judge indicated his desire to make a private communication to Squire O'Brien, and the two were presently alone together, in the li-

brary, which, as has been before suggested, was the Squire's sanctum, and whither he always retired to discuss any important question or meet any emergency requiring reflection. He soon learned that there was sufficient in Judge Anderson's communication to occupy all his attention and arouse all his interest.

Premising, by asking for the latest news from Boone and his party, the Judge was astounded at the statement that was made by Squire O'Brien. To begin with, he now learned for the first time that Boone's brother, on his return from his first visit to the woods, had brought back tidings that he had found Daniel Boone alone, and that the latter was accompanied by Harry Calvert, all his original companions having been either lost in the woods during their journey, or slain by the Indians. The particulars of Harry's departure in search of Boone, which it thus appeared had attained its object, were then made known to Judge Anderson; together with those regarding the enterprise of Maude O'Brien and her companions, who had set forth on their expedition in the latter part of the previous June. The Judge thus became informed of the exact situation of affairs so far as they were known to Squire O'Brien, and, for the first time, knew all the occurrences which had prevented his secretary from exactly carrying out his directions.

After listening to all that the Squire had to relate, the Judge began his story, or so much of it as he deemed it necessary to disclose at the present juncture. He informed the Squire of the death of Stephen Rob-

erts, but merely as though it were a piece of general news, interesting to him through the slight connection which that personage had had with Harry Calvert.

He did not refer to any of the details of his interview with Roberts; and indeed it was his fixed determination to retain the secret history of that interview and of the knowledge possessed by himself which had brought it about, closely locked up in the secret recesses of his own brain. But as the main object of his present visit was to obtain the assurance of the safety of Rafe Slaughter, he did not consider it improper to allude to so much of the knowledge he possessed of Roberts' transactions, as would facilitate his enlightenment on this score.

"I suppose you know," he said to the Squire, "that Roberts' character was not considered to be any of the best, although there had been nothing definite ever brought against him."

"Yes," replied the other, "I have always had a general impression of that kind. From time to time I learned of his supposed connection with the Regulators, and I always believed that he instigated the riot at Hillsborough, and that he was concerned in the abduction of Boone; though why he should have gone to so much trouble and apparent risk to carry out the latter purpose, I never could imagine."

"These questions are all explicable," remarked the Judge; "but the man is dead, and there is no use in our wasting time in calling up the acts of his past life. What I am most interested in at present is the acts,

which it appears to me, he may still be in a position to commit through his instruments."

"You surprise me," said the Squire, as his mind reverted to the letter given him by Mrs. Brownell, and which was safely reposing in a drawer in the table on which he leaned.

"Yes," pursued Judge Anderson, "this man indicated to me during our last conversation, in which I may, without impropriety, observe, that he was very frank and open; he intimated that he had made arrangements and started a train of circumstances which would eventually result in some catastrophe to somebody.

"His sudden death intervening, prevented any explanation on his part of the nature or details of this enterprise, but I gathered sufficient concerning it to cause me a great deal of uneasiness; and on reflection I determined to set out, and with such slight clues as I possessed, endeavor to prevent the execution of his intentions.

"Without going into particulars, I will say that the best understanding I could bestow on the whole matter led me to believe that the object of his design was the person of my secretary, Rafe Slaughter, whom I think (to speak plainly) he intended to have put out of the way."

"Good God!" cried the Squire, "you don't mean to say he intended to have him murdered?"

"My dear friend, Stephen Roberts is dead, and I could certainly have no wish to defame his character,

or misrepresent his intentions ; on the contrary, my inclination is to protect him as far as I can with justice to others ; and I will observe that I do not believe the man was willfully wicked.

“ He was terribly mistaken and misled, his judgment clouded, and his opinions biased and prejudiced, and all this resulted in making him morally a monstrous creation, capable of committing a great deal of terrible evil.

“ I need not go through the process of reasoning by which I arrived at my present opinions, but I can assure you that they are fixed, and I am almost positive that he had some nefarious purpose in his mind which he had already partially executed, and which is still being carried out, and that the object of his purpose was some evil disposition of Rafe Slaughter.”

The Squire had been nervously tapping with his fingers on the table beside him, his whole manner exhibiting disturbance and irritation.

Indeed, the unexpected presentment of a further complication of the mysterious circumstances which had already annoyed him, was beginning to tell upon his equanimity, and he could hardly wait for his friend's concluding words to disclose what he knew, and which he had begun to think might have some bearing on Judge Anderson's theories.

Opening the drawer where the letter lay which had been given to him by Mrs. Brownell, he withdrew it, and showed it to Judge Anderson ; explaining briefly the manner in which it had fallen into his hands The

Judge, after looking at the superscription a moment, said :

“ I know that writing ; it is Stephen Roberts'. I have known something about this man Brownell, too, and have seen him often. He bears the appearance of a plain, honest farmer, not particularly intelligent, and not at all that of one who would be suspected of being concerned in a plot against a man's life or property.

“ But I have my own sources of information, as well as Stephen Roberts had his, and I know Brownell's honest appearance belies the character of the man.

“ He has kept away from our part of the country for a good while—in fact, ever since the Hillsborough riot, in which he was prominent, and where to my certain knowledge he was one of the first to act, and was the prime mover in the attempt to hang one of my officials, Sheriff Caleb Glennie.

“ He is a thoroughly bad man, without any moral restraint of any kind ; I think he would not hesitate at any crime which it was made to his interest to commit. It seems to me, Squire, that in this letter we must have an important clue to the secret intentions of Stephen Roberts.”

“ It does look that way, certainly,” said the other ; “ and, to tell you the truth, when the letter was given to me, it assumed sufficient importance in my mind for me to think it would be a good idea to suppress it, at least temporarily.”

“ You did well ; and although I don't approve of invading the sanctity of a man's private correspondence

still, in these circumstances, and considering the character of the two men, I am almost inclined to recommend that this letter should be opened, and that we should acquaint ourselves with its contents."

The Squire looked startled at this proposition.

With his high sense of honor, to tamper with a sealed letter was to break the most solemn obligation between men. It appeared to him that such a communication, by its utter unguardedness and dependence on the integrity of those through whose hands it should pass, appealed warmly to the most sacred instincts of the human heart. It was like shooting an unarmed man, or striking to death one who slept in one's house, reposing confidence in his hospitality.

The Judge saw the effect of his words, and hastened to strengthen his suggestion by such arguments as occurred to him. Strongly impressed himself by the necessities of the case, and that the emergency required speedy action, he succeeded at length in overcoming the scruples of his friend; the more so, perhaps, that he undertook the entire responsibility of the act himself.

The two having agreed upon this, Judge Anderson broke the letter, opened it, and read as follows:

"WILLIAM BROWNELL:

"On receipt of this, if you have not already carried out the purpose I indicated to you at our meeting, you will at once do so. The articles I named to you are to be handled as follows: No. 1 is to be destroyed, that you may better take care of No. 2. Remember 'seven,' two of

which are already gone. Use any means you like, but take care of your own safety. When this is done communicate with me."

There was no signature, but the letter was at once recognized by Judge Anderson to be throughout in the handwriting of Stephen Roberts.

When he had finished reading it aloud, he looked at the Squire, who sat with a dazed expression, gazing straight before him. The Judge immediately returned to the letter, and read it aloud again slowly, and emphasizing carefully each word as he went along, in order that the special value of each of these, if there should be any, might appear. When he had concluded he folded the letter, and for a moment said nothing; then he looked up and remarked:

"Can you make anything out of that, O'Brien?"

"Not the least," said the other. "It appears to be a jumble of numbers which can have no meaning, except to the two persons interested."

"Unless I mistake," rejoined Judge Anderson, "they have a meaning of great interest to two or three persons, but as to who they are, I am now more in the dark than ever. But one purpose has been strengthened in my mind by reading this letter, and that is that I am determined to go on and find Rafe Slaughter, if he is on earth, and disclose the real meaning of this conspiracy.

"You see, Squire, as Brownell's wife connected me with both her husband and his master, and said

moreover, that Brownell himself had gone off to join Boone—and he must have known who his companions were—why, all of this points directly toward my own conclusions. I have **made up my mind**,” he added, rising, “that I will do what I set out from home intending to do.”

“And that is?” asked the Squire.

“To take my two companions with me, and go out and find our friends, wherever they may be.”

“And by the Lord Harry, I will go with you!” cried the Squire, and he jumped from his chair and grasped the other warmly by the hand, as if to clinch the bargain.

“I am sick of all this waiting and wondering, and now that there is so much that we can not explain mixed up with this, I know that if I remain here I shall be worried out of my life.

“I will make my preparations to join you, and we will set forth as soon as you please. Four will be better than three, in case there should be any trouble with anybody, and by this time it may be that the party of our friends might need strengthening, though I hope to Heaven this will not prove to be the case.”

The two now left the library, and as they reached the hall the Squire turned round and said to his friend, in a low tone :

“My Lady will think I am crazy, and I guess will not hesitate to say so.”

“It does look a little out of the common,” responded the Judge, laughing, “that so many of us should start

off from your house, in different parties, one going into the woods after the other, without any apparent object of sufficient moment to induce them to do so. I could hardly blame her Ladyship, if she thought that the whole of us were demented, excepting Boone, for, of course, that is his trade."

"Yes," said the Squire, "it is like firing arrows into the air one after the other, without aim, in hopes that the last one will find the rest."

CHAPTER XX.

In which Daniel Boone and Harry reappear, and the hunter quotes Scripture. The casting of the bread of kindness upon the waters of accident, is among the seed planted in the wilderness, to bring forth fruit "after many days"; and, Squire Boone having kept his appointment, the chain of events goes on unfolding.

"I AM richer than the man mentioned in the Scriptures, who owned the cattle on a thousand hills. I own the wild beasts of more than a thousand valleys."

The speaker was leaning on his rifle, gazing upon a scene that would have awakened reflection in the mind of the most inattentive observer of natural beauty. He stood upon the brow of a hill, which, sloping down many hundred feet, overlooked a broad stream flowing to the southwest through a fertile valley sparsely wooded, whose extensive plains were to be seen almost as far as the eye could reach.

On these plains immense herds of buffalo were grazing. The air had the crisp, sharp vitality of early autumn, and the trees, which had begun to turn, gave a variety of hue to the color of the landscape, which was beyond anything imaginable, vivid and brilliant.

In the distant east could be seen the towering summits of the Cumberland mountains. It was a magnificent view, and there is little wonder that Daniel Boone, though experienced in such sights, should have given

vent to the exclamatory outburst which begins this chapter.

Boone had but little changed in appearance. He was, perhaps, a trifle thinner and a little more bronzed, but his form was as erect, athletic, and sinewy, and his hazel eye as bright and piercing as when we first introduced him to the reader.

He was clad in a hunting-shirt, loosely made, of dressed deerskin, with leggings of the same material, and had on his feet a pair of moccasins. The collar of his hunting-shirt and the seams of his leggings were ornamented with fringe. Around his waist he wore a leather belt, from which was suspended on the right side a tomahawk, and on the left his hunting-knife, bullet-pouch, and powder-horn.

Beside him, seated on a fallen tree, was a young man, sun-burned and heavily-bearded, in whom his friends would have had some difficulty in recognizing the rather foppishly-dressed Harry Calvert as he appeared when in attendance upon his cousin at Mount Mourne.

He was evidently, however, in perfect health, his frame showing increased muscular strength; and though ordinarily somewhat stout in his proportions, his long pilgrimage and constant exercise in the unrestrained freedom of the wilderness, had brought him to such a state that there did not appear to be a superfluous ounce of flesh about him.

He sat resting his chin on his hand and his elbow on his knee, his rifle beside him, and gazed off into

the distance, as though absorbed in the magnificent prospect afforded him.

Turning to his companion, he said, in answer to the outburst of the latter :

“Boone, I have never known you to become enthusiastic before; and besides, I was not aware that you were so familiar with the Scriptures.”

The other laughed a short, sharp laugh, as he said :

“I ain’t much given to enthusiasm, Mr. Calvert. you’re right; but I s’pose there’s a soft spot in all of us; and that scene with all those buffalo grazing there, sort o’ set me to thinkin’ and I recalled what the man said in the Bible. I ain’t much given to quotin’ Scripture, either, but that come kind o’ pat. I guess unless it was the ten commandments, I’d have work to remember another passage.”

“Well, you could not remember one more applicable, if you knew the Bible by heart,” said Harry; “but to tell you the truth, while you and I are finding so much beauty looking westward, I must say the attraction for me lies in the opposite direction. We have seen enough of the western country in the last two years to satisfy me, at least, until I come to settle in it; and now all my mind is fixed on reaching those we have left behind us.”

“Yes, yes; I know it is natural for you to feel lonesome after so long a trip, when you are not accustomed to it. Now, you see, with me it’s different. I feel more lonesome when I am at home—though I wouldn’t care to say so to the old woman.”

"No, and she wouldn't care to have you ; and, after all, Boone, I believe you would like to meet your wife and children just as much as I would to see "—here he paused, and Boone finished the sentence for him.

"Miss O'Brien," he said, with a twinkle in his eye.

"Well, yes," continued Harry, laughing, "that about covers it ; though I would like to see Uncle Hugh and Tom Hardeman ; yes, and that curious compound and noble fellow, Rafe Slaughter. I suppose they are all together somewhere. And, by the way," he added, more energetically, "where do you suppose they are about now?"

"Well, you see, I told my brother, when he went back to the settlement, to give them our trail, and they can not make a mistake very easy. Anyhow, he is to meet us about two days from now, as my reckoning has it, and not more than a day's journey from this very spot ; and when we see him we will know more about their movements. But I guess I have looked at the buffalo as long as I want to, and, if you have no objections, we may as well be moving."

Harry arose with alacrity, and throwing his rifle over his shoulder, followed Boone into the woods.

They continued their march through the day, stopping only at noon to refresh themselves and rest for a little while, and by nightfall were many miles away from the spot where they had halted in the morning.

Here they prepared to make their camp for the night, and while Harry was busily engaged in building the fire, Boone started into the bush for a short dis-

tance, with the intention of cutting some brush to make a softer place than the ground upon which to repose for the night.

He was at work at this operation with his hunting-knife, when he heard a smothered cry in the direction of the spot where he had left his companion.

The active figure of the hunter covered the intervening space in a moment, and he sprang upon the scene—just in time to find Harry struggling in the grasp of a powerful young Indian.

This was a situation not unfamiliar to Boone, and his capacity to cope with it was not only certain, but immediate. Rightly judging that the Indian must be without companions, since they never attack a white man singly unless forced to do so, he determined to capture rather than to kill him.

In an instant he had thrown his muscular arms about the Indian, pinning his hands to his sides by the act, and thus forcing him to release Harry, whom he had grasped by the throat, and was rapidly bearing to the ground.

The Indian, thus unexpectedly attacked in the rear—for he had not seen Boone, and supposed that Harry was alone—fought stubbornly and valiantly, but to no purpose. His late antagonist being released, united his efforts to those of Boone, and the two immediately threw the savage to the ground, where the hunter quietly sat upon him, holding his two hands tightly grasped, while Harry sought in his knapsack for a piece of cord or rope with which to tie him.

This was immediately accomplished, and then Boone rising, and placing his captive in a sitting posture leaning against a tree, proceeded to interrogate him.

The reader would have at once recognized the savage as the one who had made his escape from the party of eight who had been routed by the courageous and cunning act of Rafe Slaughter ; but to Boone and Harry he was, of course, a stranger.

"He is in his war-paint," said Boone, after looking at him sharply by the waning twilight, "and must have strayed from his party, or else have escaped after a fight."

To all questioning, the Indian at first opposed contemptuous silence ; but when Boone, beginning to be exasperated, and understanding fully the nature of these people, quietly picked up his rifle and began to examine the priming, he changed his tactics.

He now showed that he could speak English well enough, and after some further hesitation, related the circumstances already known to the reader. To these he added the statement that he had been wandering about, searching in vain for the large body of the tribe to which his party had belonged, and that he was still pushing westward in the hope of overtaking them.

When he came upon Harry, as he assured Boone, he had no intention of hurting him, but only wanted to get his rifle and ammunition, as he was nearly starved, having been without arms, and obliged to subsist on herbs and roots for the period of more than two weeks which had elapsed since the fight. After further

questioning and being promised his freedom, he directed the two explorers to the spot where their friends had been captured, describing this with such accuracy that Boone made up his mind he was telling the truth.

As the fellow was evidently suffering from the want of animal food Boone permitted him to indulge in a portion of their small store of dried venison and fried pork, which was soon emitting a fragrant smell, as Harry proceeded to cook it over the fire, which was now lighted and burning vigorously.

The Indian ate voraciously, and, after his own fashion, seemed to experience a sense of gratitude; but as he was not to be altogether depended upon, the rope which had been untied from his hands to permit him to feed himself, was again secured beyond any possibility of his loosening it, and he was left on the ground to take what comfort he might.

Boone and Harry took turns at watching and sleeping through the night, and early in the morning, after again giving the Indian a sufficient repast, and supplying a little food to carry with him, untied him and told him he was free to go whither he listed. The Indian, who had hardly believed that he was to escape thus easily, shook both of them by the hands, and then with a parting salutation sped away into the forest.

The others turned their steps in the opposite direction, and this day passed like the one preceding it, bringing them at its close to the point at which Boone expected to meet his brother.

Here they took possession of a camp which had been

constructed by the hunter when on his westward journey, and which consisted simply of a few logs piled up at the side of a huge tree and covered over with the bark of the linden, making a shelter nearly in the form of an ordinary tent, in front of which the fallen trunk of a tree answered for a back-log for the fire.

As they were by this time running short of meat, the two passed the next day in hunting ; and their camp being near a salt-lick, and also only a few hundred yards from the bank of a tributary of the Louisa, or Kentucky River, they had not long to wait for game. They succeeded in securing a fine buck that had come to the spring to lick up the salt, and having skinned and cut up the animal, they had but little else to do than to wait.

But so close was Squire Boone on his appointment that at dusk on the second day after their encampment, he made his appearance mounted on a horse and leading another laden with ammunition, besides various other articles for the use and comfort of the explorers.

The greeting between the three men was unaffected and hearty. The ammunition of Boone and Harry had by this time got so low that the addition to it was very welcome. For the young man there was also a supply of tobacco and pipes, of which he stood sorely in need and with which he hastened to regale himself, as soon as they were unpacked.

The three men passed a very sociable and agreeable evening in their little hut, with a bright fire blazing in front of it. The new-comer had a great deal to relate

both as to home matters and concerning the double journey he had undertaken.

Much to the regret of the others, he could give no information concerning the movements of Maude and her companions, excepting to state the strength of their party, since they had gone before he reached the Yad-kin; but even this scanty news was grateful to his hearers, since it confirmed the truth of the story of their recent captive, and particularly as they now learned that the others were accompanied by an Indian guide, and one who was well known to Daniel Boone and his brother as a man who could be depended upon.

On the following day the three men set forth on their journey, taking turns in riding, one of them being always on foot.

Boone had made up his mind that even if the information given him by the Indian whom they had captured, as to the whereabouts of the party they were seeking should prove false, it would take them but little out of their way to follow his directions, and they accordingly followed the stream toward the point he had indicated, and which they judged was not more than twenty-five or thirty miles from their present camp.

Their progress through the almost interminable forests of eastern Kentucky was necessarily slow.

Ten miles was a very good day's march, and often they did not make so much. Sometimes for days together prospecting about the country and going on hunting expeditions delayed them.

And this was the history of nearly all such enter

prises. Experienced as Boone and his original companions had been, and although they had pushed forward at speed, and without any unnecessary delays from their first start in May, 1769, it had taken them more than a month to get a distance of some two hundred and fifty miles.

The present party moved, on the average, at very little greater speed, their horses being valuable as beasts of burden, and to save their legs, rather than to hasten their movements.

The two weeks of time which had been occupied by the escaped Indian, before he met Boone, had not been passed in straight journeying, as he had explained to them, but had much of it been wasted in fruitless excursions in different directions whither he went in hopes to come up with the rest of his tribe.

Added to this, the day's journey which had been made by the captors of Thomas Hardeman and the rest, would have had to be gone over twice before their party could be again placed in the same relative positions. But taking all this into consideration, it was a matter of surprise to Boone, when two days of steady travel in the direction of the place where they had last been seen, failed to bring about a meeting with Rafe's party. He refrained, however, from expressing his uneasiness to Harry, and waited, hoping that they would not have to go many more miles without a meeting,

CHAPTER XXI.

A "Chapter of Accidents," Capture of Boone's party, and all three in danger of a permanent loss of liberty, through an impending matrimonial catastrophe; which is providentially averted.

"WE can not be far away from the place where they had that tussle," said Boone, as the three were leaving a level plateau, over which for the distance of a few miles their march had progressed, and so on into the thick forest on the other side.

It was past noon; the travelers had eaten their mid day meal; and refreshed, and thoughtless of danger, they moved rapidly on their journey. Hardly had they left the open ground behind them, and become surrounded with the dusky shades of forest growth, when suddenly, as if by magic, their further progress was barred.

The three stopped still in their tracks, amazed at the scene which met their gaze. It appeared as though every tree had suddenly changed by some spell, and now disclosed human, instead of vegetable life. As far as they could see, the forest was filled with Indians, all armed for battle, and disguised in their war-paint.

Evidently, as it flashed across Boone's mind instantaneously, this was a part, at least, of the very tribe that the single Indian whom they had encountered had

been seeking to rejoin. Evidence as to this was furnished also on the instant ; for prominent among them could be seen the figure of their late captive.

There was time for a moment's thought on the part of those thus unexpectedly meeting, for the Indians seemed quite as much surprised as were the other party.

But it was useless to attempt either to flee from or fight so large a body, numbering apparently sixty or seventy warriors. Boone therefore determined to put the best face on the matter possible, and accordingly happening to be on foot, he advanced to the chief, who stood alone, in front of the group of Indians, and extending his hand uttered the customary salutation, "How?"

The chief did not hesitate to acknowledge the courtesy ; he grasped Boone's hand in his, and said : "How?" several times, as though to indicate the great gratification which he experienced in this meeting. The others of the party now came up, and it was speedily made clear to Harry and Squire Boone that they would do well to dismount from their horses, and let themselves be relieved of the care of those animals. This they did with wry faces, and feeling, both of them, that their position, though romantic, was not without its discomfiting circumstances.

Boone knew well enough that the party among whom he properly considered himself and his companions to be prisoners, were not going to overlook the slaughter of their comrades by white men whom they would presently know were friends of his own.

In fact, the Indian of whom we have spoken could now be seen in earnest conversation with the chief, and from the manner of both it was plain that he was identifying the captives, and it was not likely that these would long be left in ignorance of their fate.

This proved to be the case. The chief's brow darkened, and the other Indians clustered about listening, gave signs of anger and irritation which it was plain must presently have vent.

In fact, this occurred almost before Boone and the others had time to collect their thoughts.

With a wild whoop the Indians rushed upon them, and in a twinkling their arms were snatched from them, and they were standing helpless with their hands tied behind them. Harry would have resisted, but a word of counsel whispered in his ear by the hunter, quieted him.

Boone knew that resistance would mean certain and instant death; and while their position as it stood was doubtless precarious, yet while they lived there was hope and chance of escape.

Meeting with no opposition the Indians presently calmed down, and taking possession of the horses and the food and luggage which they carried, seemed to be improving somewhat in their humor as they discovered the value of the booty which had fallen to them.

Boone now vainly sought to obtain from the chief answers to questions which he put to him in regard to the intended disposition of them, and as to why they were seized when there could be nothing against them

The chief listened, and evidently understood him, but would give no reply, and showed no sensibility or emotion whatever as to them.

Boone at length, pointing to the Indian whom they had fed and released after his attack upon Harry, described the occurrence, and claimed freedom for himself and his party on account of it.

"I found your young man," he said, "attacking my friend. I was armed and could have killed him with my knife or my tomahawk. I spared his life. My friend whom he had sought to kill forgave him; and when we found that he was suffering from hunger, we fed him, and all night we permitted him to lie by our side and rest, only binding him that we might secure ourselves from danger. In the morning we untied him again, gave him food, and let him go on his way refreshed. It is not warriors going out to fight their enemies who are ungrateful and forget kindness, but squaws and beardless boys."

Then looking about over the faces of the savages grouped around him, he waved his hand, as though it included them all, and continued: "These seem to be men. I see war-paint on their faces, and arms in their hands. Are they going out to play, and did they paint themselves to frighten women and children? Are they cowards, that they have tied three harmless travelers, after having first disarmed them, that they should not defeat nigh on to one hundred warriors?"

Boone's address had its effect. That it irritated and even shamed them in some degree, was plain from the

manner of the Indians, but the general impression was in favor of the captured party.

The chief now called up the Indian whose freedom had been given him by Boone and Harry, and closely questioned him as to the truth of what had been said by the hunter.

For the moment Boone thought it possible his words might have even gained their release, but this impression was short-lived.

After conferring with the other Indians, the chief turned to Boone, and said :

"Your people killed my warriors. Their medicine-man made fire burst"—and he flung his arms into the air, to signify the explosion caused by Rafe Slaughter, and which had evidently been described to him—"and my young men were left dead on the ground. Their squaws wait for them at our village. But you were kind to one of our warriors, and you shall not die. You shall go with us to take the place of the men who were killed by your friends. You shall be husbands to their squaws."

The most of the colloquy between Boone and the chief had been conducted in the Shawnee tongue, with which Boone was passably familiar; at its close he communicated to his companions the nature of the decision reached by the chief.

The prospect was not exhilarating to any of them. The idea of being taken to an Indian village to fill the position of husband to the widow of a dead warrior, did not strike them favorably; but it was plain that

even this conclusion, if carried out, might be greatly preferable to the fate which they had not unreasonably anticipated ; and as Boone said—between them and the Indian village were many miles and many opportunities.

The march was now begun, and Harry felt his heart grow heavy in his bosom, as he saw that it took a direction almost exactly opposite to that in which they had been going—as they supposed to a speedy meeting with their friends.

After proceeding a few miles, the steps of the party were directed toward the bank of the stream which Boone and the others had followed on their way east.

Here a halt was made, and a discussion between the chief and his followers ensued. The result of this appeared presently ; a considerable body of the latter going off in a westerly direction, leaving about twenty including the chief, in charge of the prisoners.

Boone regarded this change with considerable satisfaction, as it was much easier to deal with twenty men than with seventy.

The spirits of all three rose in consequence. The spot where they were was one frequented by buffalo and other animals, which came there to drink ; and here the water was shallow, although the stream was rapid and pretty wide. The locality was evidently well known to the Indians, who at once commenced to ford the stream, taking their prisoners with them.

On gaining the opposite bank they increased their speed, evidently with the intention of reaching some

particular spot before nightfall. From an occasional word dropped by his captors, Boone gained the impression that this party was only a small portion of a whole tribe, and he came to the conclusion that some extensive warlike action was in preparation, and that their present journey was designed to bring about a union with the main body of Shawnees, probably encamped some miles further on.

It soon became evident, however, that whatever point they had in view, the Indians had made up their minds that they would not be able to reach it at the time they desired.

Word was passed to slacken their speed, a command which was sufficiently agreeable to Boone and his companions, who were by this time becoming greatly fatigued with the rapidity of their progress, and the rough ground over which they were hurried with very little consideration for their feelings. They kept on, however, until dark, when the chief gave the command to stop, and encamp for the night.

This order was at once obeyed, and the usual preparations being made, a fire built and food distributed, all, except the Indians who were placed on guard, were presently wrapt in slumber; excepting, also, Boone and his companions, who were not only too tired, but too agitated by their condition, and the conflicting emotions which disturbed them, to be immediately overcome by sleep.

They were still securely tied, and as they lay upon the ground a short distance from the fire, around which

were extended the forms of the sleeping savages, their reflections were certainly not of an agreeable cast though, as for Boone, he had been too many times in danger, and even in similar difficulty, to trouble himself much concerning the disagreeable features of his position. His watchful eye was continually on the alert, and his mind, acute and suggestive, on the lookout for some possible chance for escape.

While thus reflecting, his attention was drawn toward the Indian whose friend he had been in their chance encounter, and whose eyes, he noticed, were fixed upon him, and with not an unfriendly expression.

Perceiving at length that he had attracted Boone's attention, the Indian rose, after poking the fire for a moment with a stick, which he had picked up for that purpose, and went into the woods, as though for more fuel.

His movement was observed by the Indians who were watching, but they paid no attention to it, and a moment later Boone was surprised to hear a sound behind him—in the opposite direction to that in which the Indian had disappeared.

Turning his head, he saw the latter immediately behind him. Making a warning gesture, the Indian showed his knife in his hand, and Boone understood in a moment his intentions.

Raising himself, accordingly, so that his back, with his hands tied behind him, was exposed and within reach of the Indian, he was gratified to discover that he had not been mistaken in his impression. In a mo-

ment he felt the movement of the knife as it cut the cords which bound his hands, and turning again he saw the Indian drop it on the ground beside him, and quickly disappear. Presently he returned to his former position, with an armful of wood, which he placed upon the fire.

Having quietly and carefully possessed himself of the knife, Boone began a slow movement, which soon brought him to the side of his companions, who were lying a little distance from him, and who had not perceived what had occurred. They had seen the Indian disappear and return again with the wood for the fire, and had thought no more of it.

When Boone had reached the others, he dared only say a few words to explain what had happened. He still kept his hands behind him, but with the knife closely grasped in one of them; and his change of position, though witnessed by the Indians on watch, had not awakened any suspicion. He waited, however, before undertaking any further movement until an opportunity should present itself. This was not slow in coming, though occasioned from a quarter and by an agency the least anticipated.

The night was clear and still, the stars shone brilliantly in the heavens, and a slight breeze only moved the tops of the tall trees—sufficiently to cause that sighing in the air which is so common a sound to those who frequent the forests, and which was the only noise perceptible.

But a change came with a suddenness and unexpectedness that were electrifying.

All at once the air rang with yells that made the blood curdle in the veins of Harry and Squire Boone, but were understood by the more experienced hunter, who lay beside them watching his chance.

The fierce war-whoops at once aroused the sleeping Indians, and in an instant they were on their feet with their arms in their hands, and all was confusion.

In this moment of excitement they ceased to think of their captives, and the opportunity was seized by Daniel Boone.

With the knife which had been given him by the friendly Indian, he quickly cut the bonds which confined the limbs of his friends, and whispering: "Quick now! follow me!" darted into the woods, the others close on his heels.

Their flight was unobserved, and in a few moments they were at a considerable distance from the scene, which now resounded with the noise of conflict.

Loud yells of defiance and of mortal agony, with the crack of the rifle and the sharp whiz of arrows as they flew through the air, showed that a fierce battle was going on.

But Boone and the others did not wait long to listen; directing their steps at hazard, they continued to run at their best speed until the sounds of conflict had grown more and more distant, and at length ceased entirely. Very few words were spoken until several miles had been placed between them and the scene of their late captivity.

By this time the first light of dawn was appearing in

the east, and as they had hitherto been going in the opposite direction, Boone now paused for a moment, and called a council.

"Well," said Harry, taking the first opportunity to express the thought that was uppermost in his mind, "we have got away, and that is certainly something to be thankful for; but it occurs to me, what are we going to do in the woods without guns or ammunition? We shall starve to death certainly."

"Don't tempt Providence, young man," said Boone a little severely; "be thankful for your escape, and believe that the same power, or good fortune, or whatever you wish to call it, that accomplished that, may perhaps think enough of you to bring you safe out of your difficulties."

"After all, you are right, Boone," replied Harry, a little chop-fallen at this rebuke; "it is certainly too early to complain. I am very thankful for our escape."

"And besides, Mr. Calvert," said Boone, "you must remember that the Indian we captured, lived for two weeks on roots and nuts, and what he could do, we can."

"Well, he was a poor half-starved creature when we found him; but still, when we did find him, he was alive, and is now, unless those other red rascals—whom I bless for their interposition—have made away with him."

"Which I guess they have," said Squire Boone. "I caught sight of them as they came out of the bush, and I tell you there were more than a hundred of 'em."

"What do you suppose they were?" asked Harry.

"Cherokees," replied Boone; "they are at war with the Shawnees, who, I guess, thought they were going to steal a march on them, and will find themselves mistaken. But, anyhow, there is going to be an awful row out here before long, and I'd just as soon be away when it happens; so I think the best thing we can do will be to push right on east till we get to the mountains, and then take the pass that I came in by when I was out here first, instead of going south to the one I came through this last time."

The wisdom of this judgment seeming evident to the others, they changed their course, and pushed on rapidly eastward.

CHAPTER XXII.

The beginning of the end. Rafe Slaughter has presentiments—and Maude finds herself unexpectedly in possession of an important secret. A night-surprise followed by another, and Daniel Boone is heard from—with very decisive results. Traitors in the camp—and out of it.

THE threads of our story are now drawing together.

The reader is to be advised that the incidents which have been recounted in the last few chapters, though they occurred in different places, and involved different characters in our narrative, were actually going on at very nearly the same point of time.

Thus the death of Stephen Roberts; followed by the departure of Judge Anderson westward, and his arrival at Squire O'Brien's estate; the occurrences there, and the setting out of the two gentlemen, with their party, on their own special mission; the progress of Daniel Boone and his companion, and their meeting with Squire Boone; the subsequent journey, capture, and night-combat between the Shawnees and the Cherokees; and the escape of the three explorers; all of this was happening during about two weeks in the month of September, 1771.

Unknown to themselves, and yet with a directness of purpose which would almost seem to indicate knowledge and intention, the figures who have moved through

our history were gradually approaching each other to accomplish the ends which had been appointed for them.

In one of the most profound studies of human nature, given to delight and instruct the world by the naster spirit of fiction, as it describes human nature, is to be found the following curious passage :

“In our course through life, we shall meet the people, who are coming to meet us, from many strange places and by many strange roads, and what it is set to us to do to them, and what it is set to them to do to us, will all be done.”

The old and true saying, “Truth is stranger than fiction,” is perhaps never better illustrated than in the execution of precisely this kind of phenomenon. The seemingly improbable contingencies upon which fiction is based, are in reality the most natural part of it.

All human experience displays what are known as coincidences, in the most startling number, and of the most remarkable and unexpected nature. “It is the unforeseen which really happens,” says a French writer • and when one recalls the nature of those lives with which he is familiar, he will, in almost all instances, be confirmed in his confidence in the accuracy of this statement.

Not the least remarkable feature of the condition of the personages, to the recounting of some portion of whose lives and acts we have been directing our attention—not the least peculiar incident in regard to their situation at the time which we have now reached, was

the fact, that, though unknown to any of them, they were in reality very near together.

The course which was now being followed by Daniel Boone and his brother, and Harry Calvert, altered from their original intention by the force of circumstances, was along the right bank of the fork of the Louisa River—the same stream where we left Rafe Slaughter, Thomas Hardeman, and the rest, after they returned to the place where Rafe and the women had forded the stream and escaped from the Indians. Meanwhile, the course which was designed to be pursued by Judge Anderson and Squire O'Brien, as intimated in a previous chapter, had been actually followed by them, accompanied by the two who had accompanied the Judge from Granville; and also by a sturdy backwoodsman, temporarily employed by Squire O'Brien about his estate.

They had set forth as they had designed, and had moved rapidly in the direction taken by Rafe and his party in their search for Boone and Harry Calvert.

They were on horseback, and fully armed and equipped for any adventure that might befall them. A week's rapid traveling, undisturbed by any incident of importance, brought them to the pass in the Cumberland mountains by which Rafe's party had proceeded westward, and there we will leave them, while we return to the latter party whom we left following the fork of the Louisa River toward its junction with the latter stream.

From the time when Rafe Slaughter had undertaken

to guide the movements of his party on their new route, there had been occurrences of a nature calculated to render him uneasy and to disturb the comfort of all of them. Skirting the stream at its banks, at night they could see on the opposite side the light of camp-fires ; sometimes in single instances, or frequently, several at a time, at wide distances apart.

This state of things, hitherto not a part of their experience, was very disturbing to their minds. On the one hand, it might happen that one of these camp-fires should be that of those whom they were seeking, and as to whom their anxiety by this time had become most engrossing. But again, this could only be the case with one of them ; and though there might be other parties of white men, traders, and others about in the forests, the well-known character of this locality and the frequency with which it was made the scene of bitter and bloody warfare among the Indians, rendered this little likely.

Moreover, as was argued by the men among themselves, Brownell and the Indian guide being considered certainly good authorities, there was little probability of Boone's venturing upon lighting a fire at night, when he must certainly be aware of Indians being in the neighborhood, who might by this means discover them.

Meanwhile, over the minds of all those of their number who were most interested in the fate of the ones whom they were seeking, had come that vague impression which is so frequent in human experience—that

their friends were near them. In the conversations which they so frequently held among themselves, Maude especially had laid great stress upon the force, in her case, of this sense of their proximity to Boone and Harry.

Thomas Hardeman, who was not inclined to mental examination, either of himself or anybody else, and who seldom philosophized, except from a strictly practical stand-point, easily disposed of these impressions upon Maude's mind—to his own satisfaction, if not to hers.

"My dear Miss O'Brien," he would say, "there is nothing mysterious in your belief that Boone and Harry, if they are living, must be somewhere near us. All the probabilities point to the fact that they will now be quite as far advanced as this on their return home; and though by being (fortunately for us) on this side of the water, we are out of the track which they would naturally follow under ordinary circumstances. it is hardly to be doubted that Boone, with his skill in woodcraft, and the responsibility which he must feel concerning the important interests he is engaged in forwarding, would be more likely to adopt the safest course, and retrace his steps by the way we are going, than to run the risks which he must know would be before him if he kept on the other side of the river."

Maude laughed at this practical view, and tossed her head a little as she replied :

"Well, we all know you are not sentimental or mystical, but perhaps we may both be right, and reach the truth, both of us, though by different roads."

"I agree with Hardeman," said Rafe, "as to the probabilities of the case, while I do not dispute the force of premonitions; indeed, I am the last one to refuse to give credence to precisely that class of mental phenomena."

"Surely, Rafe," said Hardeman, "you are not superstitious; at least I have not seen anything in you to lead me to believe so."

"Well, while I do not think I am superstitious, in the ordinary sense of the word, I do sometimes place a good deal of reliance on my impressions, even when I can't discover on what they are based."

He paused for a moment, and then with a half sigh continued:

"And as it seems to illustrate this subject, I will tell you, what perhaps I should not have mentioned otherwise, that I have for some days had a presentiment, misty and undefined, but which has affected me more than perhaps it should have done."

"And that is?" asked Maude, eagerly.

"Well, it is a sense of danger—to myself"—he continued, hastily, seeing that she looked alarmed.

"I appear to be approaching something which is going to result in a grave and serious conclusion to myself."

"Did you ever have that impression before?" asked Maude.

"Once, yes; when I was in India; but at that time, it did not seem to be of a nature to affect me, individually, or at least so much so as at present."

“ Well, what happened then ? ” inquired Hardeman

“ What happened was,” replied the other, “ that at that time I was in Calcutta, which was then besieged by Suraja Dowlah, and that I narrowly escaped being among the number confined in the now celebrated ‘ Black Hole,’ of whom out of one hundred and forty-six, only twenty-three were found alive on the morning following their incarceration.”

The others were seriously affected at the recountal of their friend’s connection with this terrible event, which was still fresh in the memories of all English-speaking people, as an historical incident of their own times.

“ Well,” said Hardeman, after a moment, and evidently with a desire to throw off the effect of this narration, both from his own mind and that of his companions ; “ in the midst of the siege, with all its horrors, and especially when that was being conducted by such a brutal and bloodthirsty people as the Bengalese, it would not be surprising that you should experience impressions of coming disaster, at least in a general way ; but why you should now feel any presentiment of special danger to yourself, does not appear on account of that incident.

“ There is just so much similarity between the cases,” he added, “ that we are very possibly in the neighborhood of savages as brutal and barbarous as those whom you then encountered ; but if anything should happen to us from them, I fancy we would be united in danger and disaster.”

"Well," said Rafe, "I only mentioned this to show that Maude is not alone in her experience. But her impressions are not forebodings of disaster; and if mine are correct, they will, according to my theory, only react upon myself.

"But, to change the subject," he went on, "I have been thinking that it would be a good idea for us, considering the evident proximity of the Indians, to discover some place of safety to which we could retire in case we should be attacked, or should see any of them.

"So this morning, when John and I were out together, we took some pains to search for such a place, and I think have found one that will answer our purpose exactly."

"Then do you not mean to go on?" asked Maude, nervously.

"Just for the present, and while these camp-fires are so frequent in the neighborhood, I think it would be well to lie by quietly, out of the way, and wait and rest a little. It can not be more than a few days before these roving bands, of whoever they may consist, will have continued upon their journey."

"And what sort of a place have you found?" asked Hardeman.

"About a mile west of here," rejoined Rafe, "the land rises along the bank of the river to a height of about seventy-five feet in abrupt bluffs; skirting along the edge of these, John and I came across the entrance to a considerable cave, which we explored at once.

"It backs right on to the water, and forms quite a large apartment opening into a smaller one. At the sides there are crevices or fissures in the rock, particularly in that portion of it overhanging the river, which afford light and air: and altogether, I am certain we could hold such a place, if we were barricaded within it, against three times our number."

"How romantic!" cried Maude; "it reminds one of the persecutions of the Waldenses, and their taking refuge in caves in the mountains of Piedmont."

"Well," said Hardeman, "we are not persecuted, but we should be pretty certain to be if we fell into the hands of some of those bloodthirsty savages. I think your idea is a good one, Rafe, and we had better proceed at once to putting it into effect."

The three now joined their companions, who were loitering about the temporary encampment, and Rafe informed them of the conclusion they had reached as to their future movements. The plan was viewed favorably by all of them, and preparations were at once made to carry it into effect.

In a little while the whole party were in motion and the short distance was speedily passed over, and the cave reached.

No place of refuge could have been better chosen. The entrance was hidden behind a thick growth of underbrush, and had only been discovered through an accidental slip and fall of the guide from the rocks above, straight into the bushes which hid it. On entering, a sufficient light for all practical purposes was

found, gaining admission through the crevices of which Rafe had spoken.

The floor of the cave and the walls were perfectly dry; and the smaller apartment, extending to one side, and which opened through an aperture large enough for a person to pass through, was evidently just the place for the females of the party.

The travelers had by this time laid in a considerable stock of dried venison, while the pork and corn-meal, with which they had provided themselves on setting forth on their journey, had not yet all given out; they were therefore not likely to starve in their new retreat.

They considered it best for the present that they should not indulge in hunting, lest the sound of their rifles might bring the Indians down upon them.

In a few hours everything had been comfortably arranged in their new abode; and all settled down to wait until such time as they might safely sally forth and continue their journey. Meanwhile the Indian guide was left outside on the watch, to be relieved from time to time by one of the others; and the night passed without any disturbing incident, though the light from the camp-fires at different points on the other side of the river could be seen as before.

The ground on which they were was high, and an extended view could be had in the direction in which the fires were to be seen. Their relative positions had changed; but so little, that Brownell, upon whose judgment they all relied, was convinced that they did not indicate in their altered locality the line of march of a

large body of men, but rather the slow movements of several smaller parties.

"I tell you what I think about it, Mr. Slaughter," he said, on returning to the cave after having been out to inspect the situation. "I believe there is going to be a big war between some of these tribes—like as not the Shawnees and Cherokees. I heard, before I left home, that the Cherokees had been called together by their chiefs, and that something out of the common was going on among them. 'Pears to me as though them camps yonder was likely to be small bodies of one tribe or another within signalling distance of each other, on the lookout for the fellers they are after. If Boone and his people are over there," he added, "I would not give much for their scalps."

"Boone is smart enough to take care of himself, and whoever he has got with him," said Rafe, who did not exactly like the way in which Brownell spoke. "Besides himself he has no one with him except Mr. Calvert, who will undoubtedly have joined him long before this."

"No, that is so," said the other; "the people he took out with him were all lost or killed."

The manner in which Rafe Slaughter had received Brownell's remark about Boone did not escape the attention of the latter, though he had refrained from showing it. Ever since his discovery of the nature of the paper he had received from Rose, Rafe had experienced a feeling with regard to Brownell and his companion, which, while he could not exactly define it, or

term it suspicion, was of a character to weaken his confidence in them; and in fact, though almost involuntarily, he watched them both closely. The change in his opinions, although without his intending it, had influenced his manner, and Brownell, who was sharp to perceive anything of that nature, did not fail to discover it.

After leaving Rafe on the present occasion, he returned to the end of the cave, where he and Hunter were to sleep; and, throwing himself down beside the latter, he said, in a low voice and grumbling tone:

"I don't like the way that long-armed, bandy-legged fellow talks to me, and I ain't satisfied with the whole business, just now. This being cooped-up here in a hole, because he is afraid to let his women folks be out in the open air—for fear they might catch cold or something—don't suit me."

"But don't you think it would be risky to keep on while those Indians are about?" asked Hunter.

"Indians be hanged! It's a wild-goose chase, anyhow. Like as not, the scalps of Boone and that other fellow is hanging in some warrior's belt these six months past. I am getting sick of this whole move, and ain't sure that I won't go away, and travel back to the settlements."

"What did you come here for, anyhow?" asked the other, turning his face toward him; "you have never told me."

Brownell did not say anything for a moment and then he replied:

"Well, I ain't going to tell you—not now, anyhow there is too many ears around here ; but perhaps to-morrow, if I get the chance to speak to you, and you promise to hold your tongue, I will tell you something."

The other said nothing, but appearing to be contented with this answer, turned over on his side, and in a few moments was sound asleep—a condition which had been reached by most of the other occupants of the cave some time before.

During the following day Rafe had a close watch kept of the immediate neighborhood of the cave. The men were moving about singly in the woods, preserving a careful inspection of the paths frequented by the deer and other animals on their way to the water, and by which natural ways any travelers would be passing.

The women were not confined to the cave, though they kept themselves secluded from any possible observation from the other side of the river. Once during the day Rafe Slaughter saw a party of fifteen or twenty Indians on that side come down to the edge of the water, at a spot which was evidently a favorite resort of buffaloes and other animals ; but after gazing about them for a while, up and down the river, they retired.

Carefully regarding Rafe's injunctions not to expose themselves where they could be seen from the other side of the river, Maude and Mademoiselle amused themselves by strolling about the immediate vicinity of the cave, and were accompanied by Rose, with Mike to take care of all of them. The others were never more than a few hundred yards away, where a single

cry would reach their ears, and call them, if there was any necessity.

This delay and inactivity hung heavily on Maude's hands, after the first interest of their introduction to the cave had passed away. Her thoughts were with her lover, and now more than ever, since her heart seemed to tell her that he was not far distant from her. There was no cause for alarm in her impressions; on the contrary, she felt a positive conviction that she was to see Harry very soon; and though she laughed at herself for what seemed to her a childish infatuation, it nevertheless had its effect, and rendered the present detention more annoying.

She amused herself by strolling about, picking moss and a few late flowers; and thus engaged, had left quite a distance between herself and the others. Her way led past the edge of the bluff, at one extremity of which was the cave. Here she moved slowly, gathering moss from the gray rock at her side, but was presently startled at hearing voices speaking in a low tone, and, apparently, very near to her.

She was a thoroughly courageous girl, and not easily startled, and though she thought that none of her own people had gone in this particular direction, or were so near to her, she neither ran away nor cried out, but stood still where she was, and listened. In a moment she detected that the words spoken were English, and the next that the speaker was Brownell.

Her first impulse was to move in the direction whence the sound proceeded; but then the name of Rafe

Slaughter, coupled with an adjective which was not complimentary, changed her purpose. Just before her, at her left hand, the bluff terminated abruptly, and it was from around the corner thus formed that the sound of voices proceeded.

With noiseless steps she drew near, and ensconced herself behind a projecting fragment of rock, where she was hidden perfectly, and would be, even if the speaker and the one whom he addressed should suddenly conclude to return to the cave. In this position she heard at length what occurred between the two, of whom the other was Hunter.

"Well, you may like it, but I don't," were the first words she heard, spoken by the latter. "This is an ugly job you have got on hand, and if it was me, I would not have anything to do with it."

"Well, it isn't you," growled the other, "and you needn't have anything to do with it, except to hold your tongue; and if you ever should take it into your head not to do that, I would put you out of the way, on my own account, quicker than I would this fellow on Stephen Roberts'."

"How much are you going to get for the job?" asked Hunter, paying no attention to this threat.

"That is none of your business. It will be enough to set me up for the rest of my life, or I would not undertake it."

He paused an instant, and then, apparently thinking his manner might be improved, he added :

"I have taken you into this thing, and if you don't

peach on me, and will help me in the little you will have to do, I will see that you get a good share, and you know me well enough to be sure I will keep my word."

"Yes, you ain't given to lying to your friends, I admit, but I ain't going to bloody my hands for Steve Roberts, nor you neither."

"Nobody asked you to. I can attend to that part of it myself. What I shall want you to do, if I want you to do anything, will simply be to back me up in case I should be clumsy about it—which ain't likely—and it should come to a general rumpus. If we are smart, even if that should happen, we could get away with a few hard knocks, and there ain't anybody in this crowd as can find you and me in the woods."

"Oh, well!" said Hunter "if that is all you want, you can count on me. I won't peach, and I will back you up—there is my hand on it."

There was silence for a moment, and then Maude heard the two move as though to leave the spot where they were. Fortunately for her, they did not pass her place of hiding on their return to the cave, but went straight into the woods; and when Maude had found her way back to where she had left the others, they presently came in with Thomas Hardeman and Rafe, all, apparently, on the best of terms.

Maude was almost ready to believe that her ears had deceived her, so straightforward and friendly was the manner of these two men, as, indeed, it had been from the beginning of their association.

She was determined to tell Rafe what she had heard but a complication of circumstances prevented her doing so. It was now late in the afternoon, and Rafe almost immediately left the others to go out on watch; from this duty he did not return until nightfall, and then, after having eaten his supper, he went immediately forth again for the same purpose, accompanied by Indian John. As the women had now to retire to their own apartment, Maude perceived, with considerable anxiety, that she would have no opportunity to confer with Rafe until the following day.

For some hours, under the influence of her agitated reflections on the discovery of treachery among them, sleep absolutely refused to visit her. Over and over again she revolved in her mind the conversation she had overheard. While she was satisfied from the nature of it that some bloody deed was contemplated by Brownell, she could not be quite certain as to its object, though, from the fact of Rafe Slaughter's name having been the only one she had heard, her apprehensions were naturally turned in his direction.

Her constant association with Rafe had greatly increased her respect and regard for him, and now she viewed his character with real affection, as well as admiration. To her the idea that the danger which he had intuitively felt was impending over him, now shadowed him with such nearness and directness, was positively appalling. Lying thus engaged in gloomy reflections, while her two companions were sleeping peacefully near her, the hours passed by.

It was nearing midnight, when a loud cry from without, again repeated, roused the occupants of the cave.

Rafe and Indian John were on the watch, and, on hearing the cry, Hardeman, Brownell, and the other two men sprang from their sleep, and seizing their rifles, rushed from the cave to succor their comrades, who they divined must be in peril, and the cries their call for help.

Emerging from the underbrush which sheltered the entrance, the ears of the four men were startled by a shrill war-whoop, and they knew that their hiding-place had been discovered by their dreaded foe. At that moment a dark figure came running toward them. It was Rafe.

"Into the cave! into the cave!" he cried, "as quick as possible. The Indians are upon us."

The others turned to follow his advice, but it was too late.

Through the thick shadow of the bushes, illuminated only a little by the stars, they could see a dozen or more dark figures, and at once recognized how hopeless it would be to retreat. Raising their rifles, all four fired at once into the mass of hurrying figures, and with good effect.

The charge was stopped, the Indians evidently being thunderstruck at meeting with such prompt resistance to their attack; but it was only for a moment.

They came on again, but now Rafe, who had not yet fired, brought one of the foremost to the ground, and then he and Thomas Hardeman, who were provided with

pistols, discharged these, apparently with good effect, thus enabling the others to gain access into the cave, whither they retreated, and proceeded immediately to reload, supposing that they would be followed by the other two.

But before Rafe and Hardeman could succeed in reaching the entrance, a sudden rush was made by the Indians, and though Rafe and his friend fought valiantly, striking right and left with the butt ends of their rifles, it was apparent that the unequal contest could not last many minutes.

Indeed, a few of the Indians were already sneaking around to get behind them, and in another moment their lives would have been forfeited, when suddenly, and as it seemed from three different points, loud shouts were heard, and at the same moment the discharge of apparently a number of guns announced the interposition of help.

The Indians, thus unexpectedly attacked, and in doubt by how many new foes, drew back, hesitated a moment, and then, with loud cries of rage and alarm, precipitately fled.

Rafe dropped the butt of his rifle on the ground, and, drawing a long breath, exclaimed :

“ For God’s sake, who can that be ! ”

At the same moment the others, who had now reloaded their rifles, appeared from the cave.

And then, from three directions, could be seen the forms of three men emerging from the woods.

As they drew near, Rafe shouted, “ Who’s there ? ”

A stentorian voice replied, "Friends!" and as the speaker, the foremost of the three, advanced, in the dim light Rafe recognized him, and, crying, "DANIEL BOONE!" sprang forward and grasped the hardy hunter by both hands as he welcomed him, and thanked him for his timely appearance.

The noise of the fight had long before this brought Maude and Mademoiselle to as near the mouth of the cave as they dared to approach.

By the various movements and sounds which she heard, Maude had dimly divined that some interposition from outside had brought safety to their party; and crouching down by the mouth of the cave, she listened intently.

Suddenly her ear caught Rafe's enthusiastic cry of, "DANIEL BOONE!"

In an instant the girl darted from the cave, and flying past the excited group before it, and past Daniel Boone himself, she sprang, as though recognizing the dark figure by instinct, into the arms of the second of the three men, who had now just reached the scene.

It was indeed Harry.

The excitement of this meeting, after months of weary waiting and anxiety, overcame the girl with a flood of irrepressible feeling; and, bowing her head upon his shoulder as he clasped her close to his breast, she wept aloud in an agony of passionate delight and uncontrollable love.

Still holding her closely to him, Harry received the salutations of Rafe and Thomas Hardeman, to which

were speedily added the enthusiastic demonstrations of Mike Dooley, who danced about in a wild outburst of excitement, while Mademoiselle Raimonde and Rose were not behindhand in their expressions of the general joy.

But, turning suddenly to Rafe, as he stood eagerly asking and answering questions, Daniel Boone said :

“ Who were those two men who stood here as I came up ? ”

Rafe looked about him ; and then, surprised at not seeing them, replied :

“ Why, they must have been Brownell and Hunter.”

“ Brownell and Hunter ! ” repeated Boone ; “ how came they here with you ? ”

“ Oh,” said Rafe, “ they joined us a few weeks ago ; and have been very useful and obliging, besides strengthening our party two or three times, when we should have been badly off without them.”

“ Brownell and Hunter ! ” Boone again repeated ; “ why, these two men were with the crowd that first captured me as I was going home with my boy Jimmy from Hillsborough ! ”

The others stood astounded ; while to Maude, who, as we have told, had not yet communicated her own knowledge concerning them to any one, the statement was a revelation.

“ But where are they ? ” cried Rafe ; and the others shouted aloud the names of these two, who had disappeared as though they had been swallowed up by the earth.

No answer came back, and though an immediate search of the cave and the neighborhood was made they were not to be found.

"They got away when they saw me," said Boone quietly, after the search had been given up, "and they did well."

Whatever may have been their reasons for departure, Brownell and Hunter were not seen again.

CHAPTER XXIII.

The death of Indian John. The mode of travel is changed, giving an opportunity for reflection, which is taken advantage of by certain of the characters of our story. The travelers reach the last stage of their journey.

A FURTHER examination of the number of those present, after the absence of Brownell and Hunter had been discovered, disclosed the fact that there was still one missing—the Indian guide, who had been out with Rafe and Hardeman, and, as they had supposed, had come in when the sudden appearance of the Indians had alarmed all three. No one had seen him since, however, and a search was accordingly at once instituted for his body, it being rightly judged that, if he had been alive, he would have made his appearance, or would have responded when their calls were made for the two missing frontiersmen. After a search which lasted some minutes, and in which all the men were engaged, Mike Dooley cried out, as he stumbled over something, and fell prostrate :

“Tearan’ ages ! here is somebody’s corpus.”

The others at once joined him, and on Boone striking a light from his tinder-box, it was discovered that the body over which Mike Dooley had fallen, was really that of the unfortunate guide, who was stone dead, with a bullet through his heart ; while the work had

been completed by the Indians, for his scalp had been taken.

"That shows one thing," said Boone.

"And what is that?" asked Harry.

"Why, that the fellows that attacked you were not Cherokees, as I had supposed; if they had been, although they might have shot this man, either by accident or intentionally—considering him a deserter from the tribe, still they would not have scalped him. These must have been Shawnees."

The bodies of six or eight of their assailants were lying about at different points, where they had fallen beneath the fire of the white men. An examination of these confirmed his opinion that they were certainly Shawnees. Indian John was regretted as a faithful servant; his position among the party had been a very modest and quiet one, but he had not the less fulfilled his duty in every particular. There was no time to bury him, as they would have wished to do, and he was accordingly left where he fell.

It was, indeed, judged by Boone to be advisable that a movement should be made at once away from their present locality. The Indians were not unlikely to keep a lookout after they had got over their first alarm, and would very probably return in force. In this opinion Rafe Slaughter concurred, as did the others. That there might be no misunderstanding thereafter, Rafe requested Boone to assume the direction of the party during their return journey, which the hunter, after demurring a little, consented to do.

Their various luggage was now quickly put together and the men having shouldered their knapsacks, and giving such aid to the women as was necessary to enable them to move rapidly through the woods in the darkness, they were soon making speedy progress in the direction whither lay all their desires. Dawn soon broke, and when the sun rose, they were several miles away from the scene of their late exciting combat and reunion.

While looking for a convenient place at which to camp and take breakfast, Boone suddenly discovered on the stream immediately under the bank, and tied to trees, three birch-bark canoes, with paddles in them.

They had evidently been left there by some small band of Indians; and as these might be near by, and the use of the canoes would greatly facilitate their movements, breakfast was postponed for the time being, and the party at once stowed themselves away in the canoes. Boone, Hardeman, and Mademoiselle Raimonde taking the first one; Harry, Maude, and the negro girl the second; and Rafe, Squire Boone, and Mike Dooley the third. Thus embarked they proceeded to paddle up the stream, a task which, there being little current, was not in the least difficult.

They now made rapid progress, and Boone, who knew the nature of the waters they were navigating, stated that they would be able to travel at least thirty or forty miles by this mode, thus saving much fatigue, besides effecting a change in their mode of transportation, which was eminently agreeable, especially to the ladies.

After paddling for an hour, a point was selected where they could stop for breakfast, and all disembarked for that purpose. While they were eating they had an opportunity for a general conversation regarding recent events, which their hurried movements and after-separation in the canoes had hitherto prevented.

"By the way, Boone," said Rafe, after the hunter and Harry had related their adventures briefly, "how did you come by the rifles with which you did such execution last night, when you were left without arms on the occasion of your escape?"

"I was going to ask that question myself," said Maude, "for it did not seem likely, although a kind Providence might bring you almost, as it were, out of the ground, to our rescue, that the same power would also arm and equip you for the purpose."

"I had forgotten about that," said Boone, "and it was too ridiculous and unexpected not to be remembered; but I think I have talked long enough, and Mr Calvert can tell you about it."

Harry thus appealed to, laughed, and said: "Well, you must know we were several days without arms, and actually did have to rely upon such wild fruits and edible roots as we could get about in the woods. If I had been alone, I would have starved to death, but Boone and his brother could find something to eat under almost every plant that grows in this region, I think. I had no idea before how many roots there were that really don't make bad eating for a hungry man."

"You must have been very hungry, I think, to want to eat them," said Maude.

"Well, we did get hungry from time to time," replied Harry, "but they are not disagreeable, I can assure you ; quite as good as raw turnips and carrots—some of them, to say the least. But we got rifles and ammunition, as it happened, from the very party that surprised you ; and the way of it was this :

"We were marching along in the early morning—for I assure you that hunger made us rise before the sun—when we suddenly came upon a considerable camp, which must certainly have been of those very Indians.

"It was just at the time of day when they probably felt most secure, and relaxed their vigilance. Anyhow, there was not a man of them awake out of about thirty warriors, and Boone, having satisfied himself of this, crawled on his hands and knees into the midst of them, and selected three rifles, with powder and balls, returning safely to us with his booty.

"You may be sure that we did not lose any time in getting away from that locality. We made a wide circuit ; and to that fact, and to our having been captured and brought to this side of the river, is due our appearance in time to save and unite with you."

The glance which passed between Maude and Harry at these words, and the heightened color of the girl, showed that they at least of the party fully estimated the incident at its true value. All laughed at the successful stratagem, and congratulated themselves on the

happy accident which had done such good service to all of them.

The story of Boone's party having been related, Rafe briefly outlined that of those whom he had under his charge; and this being concluded, and the question of Brownell and Hunter's disappearance coming up, Maude took the opportunity to tell the story of the conversation she had overheard. Her relation was listened to closely, and made a deep impression on all who heard it.

After she had finished, Boone said: "Well, these fellows are, either of them, equal to any villainous contrivance, but I could easily recognize in this one the hand of Stephen Roberts. There is no doubt in my mind that he arranged the plot by which his men succeeded in capturing and imprisoning me; and this man Brownell was with the original gang, although he and one or two others left them as soon as they had safely placed me where I was found. Why he should now have it in his mind to do anything to Mr. Slaughter, I can not imagine; nor why Stephen Roberts should have anything against him. Perhaps you will understand that," he continued, addressing Rafe, "better than I will."

Rafe Slaughter had been a silent, but attentive listener to Maude's story, and Boone's comments. He remembered the paper which he still had in his possession that had been found by Rose, and given to him, and which contained his name and that of Harry Calvert. He had kept silence hitherto with regard to this paper, and he determined still to do so; and this not

on account of himself, but because of the complication of his friend with his own possible fate, as this was affected by the strange circumstances which had occurred. All he said now in answer to Boone's last observation, was: "I don't know why this man Roberts should think he had anything against me. I don't even know him, though I have seen him a number of times; and I certainly have never done or said anything to harm him."

"He impressed me," observed Harry, "at my interview with him, as being an unscrupulous and at the same time shrewd and capable man. I know I thought at the time that I should hate to have him for an enemy; though I will say that his treatment of me was courteous, and not in the least unfriendly. Of course he did not disclose to me what I desired to learn, but that was in his own interest, and I can't blame him."

Having lingered longer than was actually necessary over their breakfast, while engaged in discussing the exciting events which had happened to all of them, Boone now gave the word to proceed; and, entering the canoes, they continued their journey by the river, paddling all that day. The evening found them yet in comparatively still water, and as this mode of progression seemed to promise the most security from interruption on the part of straggling bands of Indians, Boone determined to continue their journey by the same means through the night.

They landed for supper, of which they partook in the twilight, and at which they had fresh meat for the

first time in several days. It was considered safe for them to use their rifles in their present situation, and a fat buck being discovered coming down to the water to drink, Boone mortally wounded him with a single shot, and then paddling quickly to his side, where he was struggling in the water, drew his knife across his throat, and dragged the body ashore.

Venison steaks had begun to appear a luxury to the travelers, and haste was now made to kindle a fire, and partake of the treat. A satisfactory meal having been dispatched, they returned to their canoes, and proceeded on their way.

The stream was at this point several hundred yards wide, the banks overhung with tall trees and shrubbery, that indicated the beginning of the dense forest beyond. The sky was brilliant with stars: the air cool and invigorating, but not chilly; and under the influence of their surroundings, and cheered by their reflections on their happy reunion, and the prospect of a speedy return to civilization, the progress of the travelers was both rapid and enjoyable.

To Maude, especially, there had come a spirit of calm content and tranquillity.

Reclining at one end of the canoe, she watched the form of her lover outlined against the brilliant sky, as with deft and muscular strokes he propelled the light boat with his paddle. The recollection of the trials and dangers through which she had passed seemed gradually fading from her mind. True love, when satisfied by the possession, if only temporarily, of its object is a

quick obliterator of the memory of past sorrows and disappointments.

But little conversation passed between them, but even their silence was eloquent. Harry Calvert, strengthened and ennobled by his recent experiences, found a wise satisfaction in reflecting with honest pride that he was more worthy of the girl he loved after these experiences, than he had been before.

The prime object of Boone's journey, so far as the interest of Judge Anderson and his friends was concerned, Harry knew had been satisfactorily effected.

Although it has not been deemed necessary to make special reference to the fact, the reader is not to suppose that the peregrinations of these two had consisted only in looking for the party which had followed them into the woods; or in aimless travel from day to day.

Never had the design of the undertaking been lost sight of for a moment.

The country through which they passed had been thoroughly explored by Boone and his companion, and both were prepared to make such a report to Judge Anderson, when they should see him, as should confirm previous opinions with regard to that territory, and his own conclusions as to locating there.

All of this passed through Harry's mind as he sat in the canoe, propelling it easily and gracefully in the wake of the one in which was his late companion.

Meanwhile, the soft and tender glances, which the starlight occasionally permitted him to receive from

Maude's bright eyes, carried his mind forward to the possible results of this journey.

In his imagination he already saw himself a landed proprietor in the midst of the magnificent expanse of fertile territory which they had traversed successfully and securely.

Often he had conversed with Daniel Boone on the subject of the eventual results of their mission; and from him and through his experience he had received confirmation of his own ideas.

For when Harry would give expression to the doubts which sometimes suggested themselves to his mind, as to the possibility of clearing so wide a territory of the Indians who now infested it, Boone was always ready with his answer.

Pointing to his own experience on the Yadkin, he would remind Harry, that when he arrived there, a mere lad, with his father, that section of the country was overrun by hostile Indians to quite the same extent as the locality they had so recently traversed; and yet it had been but a few years before their settlement was followed by others, and the hostile natives had either to migrate or to become peaceable and friendly.

Consoled by the remembrance of such conversations with the experienced hunter and explorer, Harry could now give rein to his imagination, and in his mind's eye see himself securely established in this now dangerous country, with the girl he loved really his own, and the successful and happy life of a great planter and land holder opening up before him in the distance.

While the reflections of Maude and her lover had been thus rose-colored, those of Rafe Slaughter, who took turns with Squire Boone in paddling the last of the three canoes, were of a very different nature.

Notwithstanding the departure of Brownell and Hunter from among them, and the apparent removal of the danger, which was now recognized, although before unknown to him; there still hung over Rafe's mind the same cloud of gloomy presentiment which had for so long a time disturbed him, and which now, as before, seemed to presage disaster. Reason with himself as he might, he could not remove this painful impression, and his thoughts were consequently sad and disturbing.

Judge Anderson's secretary had, in this period of close and increasing intimacy with his companions, grown to regard them with friendship and affection. Maude he loved more than most men do their sisters, though with a totally different kind of regard from that of a lover, while for Harry he felt profound affection and esteem.

To him the mere thought that presently this excursion would end—despite its many dangers and alarming circumstances—the thought that it was now speedily to close was one that could not but affect him painfully.

Aware that soon all these persons, who were now united by a bond of interest and sympathetic communion, each and all would depart on their several ways to take up their several threads of life, leaving him to a great extent out of their future, and alone; all of this

gave him a sensation of impending solitude, which was to the last degree depressing.

It was almost in the light of consolation that his mind accepted the prescience of coming evil which seemed to assure him that a kind Providence might at least find a way for him to escape a future which seemed to offer no compensation adequate for the loss which the present, almost, had in store for him.

There were, too, crossing Rafe Slaughter's mind, thoughts and intentions, dimly outlined, to which he had never yet given voice.

The secret history of his past life, as he supposed, was unknown to any, at least in this part of the world, but himself; and so the designs which he had formed, and now cherished as the only bright hope to illuminate his future: these were also locked within his own breast, and gave him ample food for reflection.

There were links in the chain of circumstances which united him with certain of his companions, the existence of which was unknown to them; and he was now impressed with the necessity of strengthening these, and of at least initiating the purposes which it was essential should be carried out in order to achieve this end.

As he paused for a moment in directing the course of the canoe to rest himself and change his position, he instinctively placed his hand in the pocket of the waistcoat which he wore under his hunting-shirt, and felt there two papers: One, the fragment which had been given to him by Rose; the other a larger and thicker

sheet, whose folded proportions he carefully outlined with his fingers, as he had done many times before, to satisfy himself of its safety.

What that paper contained was a secret which still rested alone in the knowledge of Rafe Slaughter.

While the personages whose thoughts we have been analyzing were thus engaged, the progress of the canoes had been speedy, and the nature of the stream up which they were being propelled had materially changed.

The current had become more rapid, the width of the stream had lessened, and shallows occasionally appeared; and large boulders, seemingly dropped in the midst of the water, impeded their progress, while the stream dashed with considerable force between them. Careful steering was now necessary, and this was aided by the dawn which had begun to break.

By this time Maude and Mademoiselle were sleeping profoundly in their several canoes, while Rose had been snoring loudly almost from the beginning of the trip. Mike Dooley, too, after sundry comments on the Indian method of river travel, which was new to him—these being delivered in the choicest and most original phrases of his vernacular—he also had succumbed to the drowsy god, and was adding his mite of nasal eloquence to render still more musical the concerted pieces which were being executed by the bull-frogs and owls.

The other men of the party had kept awake; only those not engaged in paddling occasionally dozing a

little. As the obstructions in the way increased, and navigation began to appear even dangerous, Boone decided to give it up and take to the shore again. They accordingly paddled in to the land, where there appeared to be a favorable spot for that purpose, and disembarked.

It was by this time sunrise, and a hurried meal from a portion of the venison which they had brought with them, soon placed the travelers in a condition to proceed on their march with revived strength and energy. Boone judged that they were now but about a day's journey from the pass through which he purposed going, and in their progress toward which they had already reached a point nearly at the foot of the Cumberland range, whose elevated peaks now towered high above them.

CHAPTER XXIV.

Amid the sublimest efforts of Nature, in rugged rock and riven mountain-chain, our travelers pursue their way, joyfully. Then, all is changed ; and lingering by the bank of a chance stream, the blow falls ; their happiness is turned to mourning, and Rafe Slaughter's premonitions come to pass.

THE Cumberland mountains, a spur of the Appalachian range, dividing Kentucky from Virginia, and extending into Tennessee, present some of the most picturesque scenery in America.

The general appearance of this mountain range is that of a somewhat level plateau lying about two thousand feet above the sea, and broken at intervals by lofty peaks and abrupt bluffs and promontories.

At certain points the range is intersected by passes, or as they are termed, "gaps," through which are the only convenient means of passage from one side to the other. Of these passes, that known as Cumberland Gap, near the southern extremity of the range, was the earliest used, and has always been the most frequented.

Here was the customary road followed by the Cherokees in the earliest times, and this was also adopted by the traders who penetrated the southwest, following the pioneers and frontiersmen who opened up this section of country.

The course being pursued by our party, now so considerably increased in strength if not in numbers, was in the direction of a pass extending through the mountains at a point about eighty miles north of Cumberland Gap.

As Boone had anticipated, a single day's journey brought them to the entrance to this pass. It was but little frequented, and that little only by the Indians and occasionally a few traders.

Entering it from the west the route assumed at once a steepness of incline and a wild and romantic aspect, which as the travelers progressed grew to be grand in the extreme.

The pathway, which was but little improved from its natural configuration, extended along the side of a precipitous rocky declivity, and above it on either hand almost perpendicular masses of rock towered many hundred and in some instances several thousand feet in the air. In all directions the characteristics of the scene were gloomy and almost solemn. There was but little verdure and no vegetation, excepting here and there clumps of rugged ash or hickory trees, while, on either hand, rocks in massive and uncouth shapes disputed the way.

Alternately climbing and descending as the available pathway varied in its incline, the labor of this part of the journey was irksome, although, of course, every assistance was given by the men to the women in their charge.

To Harry Calvert it was a delight to render the serv-

ice to Maude which was so constantly required, while the tedious and toilsome character of the journey became changed to her mental vision until it assumed the nature of a holiday jaunt—in which she felt herself sustained and aided by the sympathetic association which grew more delightful with every moment of her enjoyment of it.

Two days were occupied in the passage of this gap ; one night being passed within its limits. It was about noon on the third day when the tired travelers emerged from the pass and entered the Province of Virginia. During that afternoon and night they encamped at the foot of the mountains, resting and regaining strength for the remainder of their journey.

On the following morning all were up betimes, much refreshed, and as each felt more and more anxious to reach the settlements, as each day brought these nearer to them, there was no delay, but an early start was effected and rapid progress made.

The line of march was still through a rugged country ; but, after what they had so recently passed, was comparatively easy. On the second day after leaving the pass they arrived, toward sundown, on the banks of the Clinch River, where they encamped for the night.

It was not yet dusk, and while the camp was being prepared and the fire built, Rafe Slaughter, who for the last few days had been more than usually oppressed by the gloomy frame of mind which had so much influenced him of late, left the others of the party, and

strolled a short distance along the bank of the river wrapped in his own melancholy thoughts. A good deal overcome by these, at length he threw himself on the ground at the foot of a large tree, and gazed listlessly into the water.

Thus preoccupied he saw and heard nothing of what was proceeding about him.

He did not hear the crackling of the underbrush behind him, as though by the stealthy movement of some one in his direction. He did not see the crouching form of one who approached him, his steps carefully measured and adjusted to produce the least noise possible.

The man was clad in the ordinary garb of a hunter. In his right hand he held his hunting-knife, with his left he carefully pushed aside the overhanging boughs that might impede his progress, or by breaking or cracking announce his presence. Despite all his care the sound of his approach would have undoubtedly reached the usually quick ear of Judge Anderson's secretary but for the engrossed state of his mind.

The man was Brownell.

His face was pale and his jaws set as though with determination, and now there was an expression in his countenance brutal and malign, which one seeing would have declared to have been his natural aspect, rather than the hearty and friendly appearance which he generally assumed.

Thus crouching and creeping, and guarding himself from discovery, he approached nearer and nearer, until his left hand rested upon the tree against which Rafe

leaned. For a few seconds he stood perfectly still. Then, bending his form about the tree, he raised his right hand in the air. In a moment the blow fell. The long bright, sharp blade flashed for an instant, and then it was buried to the handle in the bosom of his victim.

Rafe Slaughter possessed a vigorous constitution and a powerful *physique*. This was a death-blow, yet he had strength to rise and turn about, while he clung to the tree with his right arm for support. The movement was instantaneous, and brought him face to face with his slayer.

Then a shrill cry broke from his lips, blood gurgled from his mouth, and sinking gradually down, he fell in a heap, prostrate at the foot of the tree.

Certain that his work was completed, and fearful lest the cry of the murdered man, though it was not a loud one, should have been heard, the murderer left the spot and fled through the woods to where his companion was awaiting him holding in his hands their two rifles.

"Give me my gun and hurry!" cried Brownell as he reached him.

"Is it done?" said the other, as he extended his rifle toward him.

"Of course it is done, you infernal fool!"

And then the two with rapid steps pushed along the path which lay before them, but only for a few moments.

Suddenly, on turning a sharp corner, to their astonishment and alarm they found themselves confronted by a number of horsemen.

The unexpectedness of the meeting startled both of

them out of their equanimity, and their manner was so thoroughly disturbed and terror-stricken, that the rider in advance of the party, seeing that they were about to evade him, sprang from his horse and ordered them to halt.

It was Judge Anderson, who, seizing Brownell by the arm in his powerful grasp, shouted :

“Cover them both with your rifles. This fellow has got blood on him, and I don’t like the looks of them, anyway.”

At this moment Brownell recovered himself, and with a sudden spring sought to break from the grasp of his captor ; but the Judge was a large man and a strong one, and he had expected this movement. Seizing him by the throat with both hands, he bore him to the ground, where he held him firmly despite his struggles, now grown fierce and determined as the extent of his real peril flashed upon him.

Meanwhile the two younger men of Anderson’s party had leaped from their horses and seized Hunter, who at once begged for mercy, crying out :

“Gentlemen, spare me ! spare me ! I have done nothing. Brownell is the man !”

“Brownell !” cried Anderson and the Squire in one voice.

“Good God !” said Anderson. “Then I am too late, after all. Here, hold this villain, some of you, while I go and search for his victim. Where is he, you infernal cowardly hound ?” he cried to Hunter, as Brownell was being tied by the others.

"Only a few rods back there—at the left—by the river," said Hunter, emitting the words with difficulty, as Judge Anderson had clutched him by the throat, and was nearly choking him to death.

Spurning him to one side, and leaving him to the care of those who had already bound his companion, the Judge ran rapidly in the direction Hunter had pointed out.

But very little search brought him to the spot, and he came upon poor Rafe's body still lying where he had fallen.

Lifting his unfortunate friend in his arms, with his head leaning on his shoulder, Judge Anderson could not restrain the tears which welled up to his eyes as he saw by Rafe's pallid countenance that if not dead, he must be very near it. Placing his hand under his hunting-shirt he felt a slight beating of the heart, and drawing from his pocket a flask of spirits, he poured a little through his clenched teeth and down his throat.

The unfortunate man gasped and struggled a little, but the effect was to revive him, and in a moment he opened his eyes, and, looking about wildly, presently turned them upon Judge Anderson, who was leaning forward gazing fixedly at him. A smile of recognition faintly illumined his face, and he pressed the hand of the Judge to show that he knew him.

The noise and confusion of the struggle with Brownell and Hunter had been heard in the camp, which was only a short distance away.

Maude was the first to notice it, and also to observe

that Rafe was not with them. Rising to her feet where she sat inspecting the preparations for supper, she turned to Harry, and cried :

“Oh, Harry! do you hear those shouts? I fear something has happened to Rafe.”

And then, suddenly, the whole memory of her kind friend's recent premonitions surged through her mind, and she wrung her hands and burst into tears.

Harry had long before this noticed Rafe's serious and preoccupied manner, and Maude had explained to him its cause.

For the moment, impressed with and sharing her fears, he seized his rifle, and followed by Boone and Hardeman, flew in the direction whence the sounds had seemed to come. He followed the course taken by Rafe when he left the camp, and this brought him presently to the scene of the tragedy.

By this time Squire O'Brien had joined the Judge, and both were endeavoring to revive Rafe, who had not yet been able to speak; so that as Harry Calvert came up, to his astonishment he found himself in the presence of his uncle and the Judge, whom he had supposed to be many miles away at their respective homes.

But the surprise at this meeting was lost in horror at the sight of his friend stretched on the ground, and evidently with his life-blood rapidly ebbing away.

Very few words were spoken between them, and while Harry returned to prepare Maude for the terrible catastrophe which had occurred the others lifted Rafe

from the ground and bore him carefully and tenderly to the camp.

The agony of sorrow and regret that came over poor Maude when she saw that the presentiment of her unhappy friend had come true, was terrible to witness. She did not, however, lose her presence of mind, but with all assiduity devoted herself to such measures as were suggested, with the faint hope of possibly saving his life.

It speedily became evident, however, that this could not be. His pulse was momentarily failing, and it was plain that he could last but a little while longer.

In this extremity, and seeming to see in the sad and tender gaze of those who stood about ministering to him that his end was near, Rafe Slaughter made one effort.

Exerting all his remaining strength, he moved his right hand toward his left side, the outer clothing having been opened to admit of proper attention to his wound, and seemed endeavoring to reach the pocket in his vest on that side. Perceiving the movement, Judge Anderson said :

"Is there anything in your pocket that you wish to have removed from it?"

Rafe nodded and dropped his hand feebly where it was.

The Judge inserted his hand in the place indicated, and drew therefrom the two papers to which we have already alluded.

"Are these what you mean, Rafe?" he said, gently.

Rafe nodded again, and then with a superhuman effort spoke these words feebly and disjointedly :

“ I—acknowledge—that—paper—to—be—my—last will—and—testament. My—name—is—not—Rafe—Slaughter—but—Gabriel—Herron ! ”

He paused for an instant, and then raising his right hand a little, he continued :

“ Maude—and—Harry—God—bless—you ! ”

The two to whom he had last addressed himself were leaning above him, Harry supporting Maude with his arm about her waist, and both weeping bitterly.

As the appeal to his Maker left his lips, the soul of him who been known to these his friends as Rafe Slaughter, departed his body. His head fell heavily back on Judge Anderson's breast, and he was dead.

CHAPTER XXV.

In which Rafe Slaughter's last will and testament is read ; and the production and perusal of certain other documents, explain some of the mysteries which have infested this narrative. The murderer plays his last card, and, failing of success, exposes certain complications of interest. The friends of Rafe Slaughter bid him farewell.

THE terrible calamity which had now befallen our friends, so recently happily reunited after their lengthened separation,—this catastrophe, so unexpected,—could not but affect the spirits of all of the members of the little association of pioneers.

Now that Rafe Slaughter was gone from among them, every one of his associates felt a special and individual loss and corresponding grief.

There was not one but had some recollection concerning some kind act or attention of their deceased friend. His ever-present sense of responsibility ; the care and judgment which he had exercised in conducting the party so successfully amid so many trials and dangers ; the prompt and certain bravery which had characterized him when danger actually appeared ; the unfailing thoughtfulness and consideration for others ; and the unflagging good-humor and fortitude with which he had borne his share, and more, of all their privations : all of these qualities of the leader, associate,

and friend, were now recalled to the minds of his late companions.

For a long time their grief prevented them from considering any other fact but the terrible one that Rafe Slaughter was dead.

Lying there, so calm and placid, it was difficult for them to believe that he was not enjoying the temporary repose which he had so well earned, and which he had so sorely needed.

The camp was a scene of mourning; but as the first recognition of the evil which had befallen them became more familiar to their minds, another thought was awakened which soon began to exercise its own influence. A revengeful spirit grew in the hearts of those grieved ones, and hatred of his murderer mingled with lamentations for the murdered.

Several hours had elapsed, and they were all sitting about the camp-fire recalling memories of the dead, and occasionally one or another interjecting a question concerning the recent movements of the living, when word was brought by Squire Boone, who, with one of the young men accompanying Judge Anderson, was guarding the two prisoners, that Brownell desired to see Mr. Calvert, on a matter closely concerning the latter.

At first, the repugnance which he felt toward the man, inclined Harry to disregard the request; but the others thought it advisable that he should comply with it, and he rose from his reclining posture to do so, when Judge Anderson said, "Wait a moment, Mr. Calvert.

Before you see him, I think it will be well for us first to examine the contents of poor Rafe's will."

This observation brought fresh to the minds of all, the astounding intelligence which Rafe had communicated in his last words. So unexpected had this been that it seemed impossible for any of them to overcome their old familiarity with the name of Rafe Slaughter, and to recall that he who bore it was justly entitled to another, and that he was in reality the lost relative of Harry Calvert, and the one who had innocently stood in his place in his uncle's regard.

As these recollections flashed upon his mind, and in answer to Judge Anderson's suggestion, Harry stopped where he was standing, shaken by a combination of conflicting emotions. Perceiving the deep feelings, whose exhibition the young man sought vainly to repress, the Judge said to him kindly :

"Sit down, my young friend ; it will only occupy a few moments, and it has to be gone through with sometime."

Harry quietly complied with this request, and seated himself again by his cousin, who softly laid her hand upon his, signifying by the act that she was with him in his sorrows as in his joys.

The Judge now drew the paper from his pocket, and opening it proceeded to read.

The will had been executed in Granville County during the period when Rafe—for so we shall continue to call him—had been attending to the affairs of Judge Anderson, while Harry was in Baltimore.

The act had been kept a profound secret even from the Judge, although the latter knew well the lawyer who had drawn up the paper, and the witnesses who had attested to the signature.

Attached to the will were documents signed by parties residing in the Colonies, fully testifying to the fact that he who called himself Rafe Slaughter, was in reality no other than Gabriel Herron, the heir of Frederick Calvert and the executor of the instrument before them.

The will itself, carefully drawn up in the usual form, and with the customary preamble, exhibited a precise knowledge of the provisions of the testamentary disposition of the property which had been bequeathed to Gabriel Herron by his uncle.

The paper also showed that the present testator had complied with all the essential conditions of law, in regard to a proper declaration before authorized officials, regarding his rights under the will of the late Frederick Calvert. All of these preliminaries had been carefully attended to; so carefully indeed, as to draw an involuntary remark from Judge Anderson, as to the closeness and accuracy with which this instrument was drawn, and all the necessary provisions of the law complied with.

These all having been duly set forth, the will proceeded to bequeath the entire interest of the deceased in his uncle's property to his cousin Harry Calvert.

The document concluded with a kindly intimation of the hope of the testator, that his heir might obtain the fruition of his hopes in a happy marriage with his cous-

in Maude O'Brien ; as to whom it was thus seen, that even at this early stage of his acquaintance with her, the deceased had formed sentiments of profound respect and admiration.

After reading the will, and while those present were silent, engaged in their own reflections, Judge Anderson mechanically opened the small piece of paper which accompanied it.

Glancing casually over the few lines which were written upon this, he uttered an exclamation of surprise. The others looked at him inquiringly, when he turned to the Squire and said :

“O'Brien, have you got with you the letter which was addressed to Brownell?”

There was a movement among those who heard him ask this question, and a general expression in their faces of surprise and curiosity. So little had been said about anything connected with recent occurrences that this letter had not yet been mentioned.

The Squire drew a wallet from his pocket, and opening it extracted from it, and handed to Judge Anderson, the letter in question. Opening it, the Judge scanned it carefully, and then appeared to be comparing its contents with those of the paper before him. Presently he said :

“This paper is in the handwriting of Stephen Roberts ; I wonder how it came into poor Rafe's possession !”

On hearing these words, Rose, who was sitting a little distance from the speaker, and who had listened

eagerly to every word that had been uttered, sprang to her feet and cried out, "I know, Massa Judge!"

All looked at her with amazement, and the Judge said:

"What do you know about it, my good girl?"

"Why, Massa Judge, I found dat paper, one day, ebber so long ago, when it dropped from Massa Brownell's pocket, and de wind cotched it, an' took it away down to de bank ob de ribber. I seed it a flyin' an' I runned for it, an' I cotched it, an' just den Massa Rafe' —Here the girl's feelings overcame her, for she, like every one else, had none but kindly recollections of poor Rafe. Recovering herself in a moment, she continued in a low, broken voice:

"Massa Rafe asked me fer de paper, and I gived it to him, an' he read it an' put it in his pocket, an' tole me to say nuffin about it to no one, an' I nebber did. Golly! Massa Judge, I'd get cut into inch pieces 'fore I'd done anything Massa Rafe tole me not to do."

The girl burst into sobs and tears, and ran into the bush, until she should recover command of herself.

"This paper," said Judge Anderson, slowly and gravely, after Rose had got through, "should have been a warning to poor Rafe." He then read it aloud, as follows:

"Rafe Slaughter, (1): Harry Calvert, (2): Seven years."

"It did act as a warning to him," cried out Maude, excitedly, "for it must have been that which gave him

the terrible presentiment of coming danger that has afflicted him for so many days."

"Yes," said Hardeman, recalling the conversation between Maude, Rafe, and himself, "this explains the extraordinary remarks which he made to Miss O'Brien and myself one day, when he informed us of his having experienced these premonitions. Poor fellow! we little thought how unerring was his instinct."

"Still," interrupted the Squire, who, himself, was, like Hardeman, no believer in supernatural interpositions of this nature—"the presentiment itself is now explained, by his having possession of this memorandum; and now, Judge," he added, turning to the latter, "I understand, as you will, the meaning of that letter."

The Judge lifted the letter in question, from where he had let it fall, while listening to the remarks that were being made, and read aloud as follows.

"William Brownell:

"On receipt of this, if you have not already begun to carry out the purposes I indicated to you at our meeting, you will at once do so. The articles I named to you, are to be handled as follows: No. 1 is to be destroyed, so that you may better take care of No. 2. Remember Seven, two of which are already gone. Use any means you like, but take care of your own safety. When this is done communicate with me."

"It is all, alas! too clear," said the Judge, as he refolded the letter, and handed it to Squire O'Brien; "this memorandum explains it, as the letter itself was

designed to complete in writing, which could only be understood by the one who received it, the orders which had been previously given verbally.

"No. 1 was poor Rafe, who was to be destroyed. No. 2 was you, my young friend," he said, addressing Harry Calvert; "but as to the motive of the act I am now all at sea; since the letter says that it was to be committed so that the murderer 'might better take care of No. 2,' which is you; the (7) referred to the seven years named in your uncle's will, two of which had elapsed.

"Without going into particulars now, I will say in explanation, that the idea of Squire O'Brien and myself, in coming out here, was to protect the life of my secretary. From various circumstances, I had reason to believe it was threatened; but in all my thinking on the subject, the theory I had formed was that poor Rafe was to be slaughtered on account of his connection with me, since Stephen Roberts was my enemy, and the enemy of the purposes I had planned."

"Perhaps the best thing to do," here observed Daniel Boone, who had not hitherto spoken, "is for Mr. Calvert to go and see Brownell, as he has requested. The scoundrel may possibly drop something that will explain the real motive of his murderous act."

"You are right, Boone," said the Judge; "and now that you are fortunately fully informed," he added to Harry, "you had better at once go and see what the man has to say. I need not advise you to say nothing yourself, until you have heard his story."

"I certainly shall not," said Harry, rising to depart on his errand; "it will be difficult for me even to listen to him, and I could not possibly say anything more to him than was absolutely necessary."

"One moment!" exclaimed Judge Anderson, as though he had forgotten something; "I neglected to mention one important fact: Stephen Roberts is dead. He died at his office, in my presence, about four weeks ago, after making partial confessions to me, on which I based my suspicions concerning his intentions with regard to my poor friend."

Though surprised and startled, Harry said nothing, but hurried away to his appointment; leaving the others thunderstruck at this astounding piece of news.

Squire Boone had returned to Brownell and reported that Mr. Calvert would speak to him shortly. Leaving the others, Harry proceeded to the spot some ways back from the camp, where Brownell and Hunter, both securely tied, were lying upon the ground, closely watched by the guards who had been placed over them. A fire had been kindled there, also; and its light illumined the faces of the four persons beside it.

On seeing Harry, Brownell moved a little restlessly, and his face turned a shade paler. Drawing near to him, Harry said, sternly: "What do you want with me?"

"What I have got to say to you, Mr. Calvert, is in your own interest, and it will be better for you that nobody else should hear it."

Harry felt such a sentiment of anger and hatred

against this man, that he could hardly bring himself to consent to a private interview ; but a moment's reflection showed him, that perhaps in the interests of justice it would be best, and he accordingly requested Squire Boone to untie Brownell, and then keeping him closely covered with a pistol he permitted him to step a few paces aside, where he would not be overheard.

"Now, go on with what you have to say!" cried Harry, "and be quick about it."

"Well," said the other, and he looked in Harry's face, in a manner that was the reverse of remorseful ; "there is no reason why you should be so hard on me ; as what I did, I did for your sake."

Warned though he was by the communication he had just received, Harry could not resist an expression of loathing as he heard these words.

"For my sake, you scoundrel," said he, "what do you mean? How could you brutally murder my friend, and term it for my sake?"

"Well, Mr. Calvert, I know it looks onreasonable, but it is the truth. My life is in your hands, and I won't conceal anything from you. The man I killed was not Rafe Slaughter, as he pretended ; going around with a name that did not belong to him ; his real name was Gabriel Herron, and he was the man that got your inheritance away from you."

If Brownell anticipated any movement of surprise on the part of his auditor, he was disappointed. Harry never moved a muscle, but staring him straight in the face, said simply : "Go on ; I am listening."

Thinking that this manner might be assumed, Brownell continued, although a little chop-fallen at this cool reception of his most important card :

“ He stole your inheritance,” he went on, “ and so instead of being your friend, he must have been your enemy ; and nobody could tell but himself—and now he can’t—what he might have meant to do to you if he had lived.”

Despite his forced calmness, Harry was so affected by this scandalous insinuation, that only the recollection of the man’s hands being tied, prevented him from striking him. He kept control of himself, however ; and, after waiting a moment, and receiving no response to this cowardly accusation of the dead, Brownell went on :

“ Stephen Roberts, down in Hillsborough, put me up to this, and I agreed to do it ; because he told me it was for your interest, and this other man was an impostor ; I am sure I had nothing agin him,” he added, in a whining voice, for the imperturbable silence of the other had by this time had its effect upon his own equanimity.

Harry now saw that it was necessary for him to question the fellow, if he would get at the merits of the case.

“ What could Roberts’ motive have been in directing such an infamous assassination ? He was no friend of mine, and I never saw him but once in my life ’

“ Once was enough for Steve Roberts,” said the other slyly. “ Mr. Calvert, anybody who knows anything

about Roberts, knows that all he lives for is the Regulators."

"*Did* live for," said Harry; "he is dead."

On hearing this, Brownell started back so suddenly, that, tied as he was, he would have fallen had not Harry seized him by the arm, and shaken him back into an erect position.

The unexpected blow told fearfully. The man's jaw dropped, and his face became clammy with perspiration.

"Dead!" he repeated. "Great God! you don't mean it!"

"He is dead," repeated Harry; "Judge Anderson saw him die, at his office in Hillsborough."

"Then God damn his soul!" replied the other, almost in a shriek. "He has got me into this scrape, and I hope his infernal carcass will burn in hell."

Moved almost with a sense of compassion at this terrible outburst, Harry stood, regarding the man, as he fairly foamed at the mouth, in his passion of anger and terror.

"Leave him," he said, presently, "to the God you invoke; who will deal with both of you according to your deserts."

"Oh! it is all up with me," cried the other, now evidently grown reckless, as his certain fate stared him in the face. "My jig is up. But I will do as much damage as I can to Steve Roberts' memory while I live.

"Now, look here, Mr. Calvert, I will make a clear

breast of it. That man Roberts made a plot against you, that the devil himself could not have imagined.

"You remember your second visit to him, when you was on your way back from the coast."

"I do," said Harry, "very well. It was no visit of mine; he called me into his office."

"That was a part of his plan. He knew then who Rafe Slaughter was, and that you had lost through him the property you expected from your uncle. That visit of yours gave him his opportunity. He made up his mind that he was going to get some of that money to help the Regulators. He knew he could not get it out of Rafe Slaughter, and so he planned to get it out of you."

"How could he hope to get money out of me by instigating the murder of my best friend? and he was my best friend, and not my enemy, as you pretend to believe. I know though, Brownell, that you don't believe it; but, at least, when you reflect that the man you so brutally murdered, saved your life, with the others, when you were a prisoner among the Indians, I should think you would drop dead in your tracks at the reflection of what you have done."

That Brownell was affected by this speech and the recollection it recalled, was evident in his manner. He trembled like a leaf shaken by the wind, tottered, and would have fallen—but recovered himself by a powerful effort, and stood listening. When Harry had concluded, he went on, however, as though ignoring what had last been said:

"I will tell how Stephen Roberts expected to get money out of you, after he had procured the killing of the one you call your best friend."

Leaning forward suddenly, with his face so close to Harry's that they almost touched, while the other recoiled in horror, he exclaimed in a hoarse whisper, "He meant to charge you with instigating the crime."

"My God!" exclaimed Harry; "are you mad? How could he do that?"

"Easy enough," said the other; "by using your second interview with him in his office in Hillsborough, when you had just obtained the knowledge that you were disinherited. Oh, his scheme was likely enough, and might have succeeded, though now that I see what kind of a man you are, I don't think so much of it as I did.

"His plan was just this: I was to put the man out of the way; then I was to go to you, and show you what a benefit his death would be to you, because you would now get the property; then he thought that out of gratitude to him, and supposing you would have some angry feelings against the man for keeping you out of your rights, you would be willing to give him a good round sum in the way of compensation, which he could use to carry out the plans of the Regulators."

"My God! my God!" ejaculated poor Harry.

After a moment's silence and reflection, he said:

"But supposing this hideous presumption of his should have failed—which you must know by this time it certainly would—then what would he have done?"

"Why, just this," cried the other "I would have reminded you of your meeting with Stephen Roberts at Hillsborough. I would have told you that he was ready to swear that he then informed you of the identity of Rafe Slaughter with Gabriel Herron, and that you employed him to have him murdered, so that you could get the property; and that you promised him if it was done, he should have half of what you received for getting it done.

"He had got the scheme all arranged; could have produced witnesses to swear they were in the next room and heard the conversation; and I tell you, Mr. Calvert, he would have brought such a power of evidence to bear, that, the man being dead, and you not being able to do him any good, you would have come into his terms to save your own prospects and your life, and the feelings and happiness of the girl you loved. I tell you, nothing but the hand of God could have destroyed that scheme, and that is what has done it."

To say that Harry was stunned by the tremendous and terrible character of these revelations, is to give but a light expression of his feelings.

While he felt the horror of the plan that he could not doubt had been devised by Stephen Roberts, and the thought of which shook him to the core, he was forced to admit that there did not seem to be a flaw in it.

It was plain to him that nothing but the death of the wretch who had conceived this villainous plot, and the capture of his tool, could have saved him from being meshed in a network of circumstantial evidence, under

which he could not be sure that his firmness would not have been broken. And as he thought of Maude O'Brien in this connection, a cold perspiration started to his brow, the blood returned to his heart, and with a sigh that was almost a sob, as he reflected that Providence had spared him such a fearful conflict, he turned to close the interview.

"Is there anything more you wish to say?" he asked.

"No," said the other, sullenly.

All the excitement which had arisen in him as he recapitulated the details of the plot, in whose carrying out he had been a chief instrument, had now left him, and his face expressed gloom and despair.

"No, I have nothing more to say. Stephen Roberts is dead, and I soon will be. I took the risks and they have gone agin me. I am sorry for my old woman and the children," he added, half to himself, "but they won't lose much when they lose me."

Moved a little in spite of himself, as he heard the last remark of the hopeless wretch, Harry said, a little more kindly :

"Well, as you have concluded, you may return to where you were."

The man raised his head and looked at him for a moment.

"Mr. Calvert," he said, "do me one kindness!"

"What is that?"

"You've got a loaded pistol in your hand; put a bullet through my head. You won't get hurt. You can tell any story you like, and if you tell the true one

about what I have said to you, it would be cause enough for killing me. The law won't touch you. Do it, won't you? I don't want to be hung like a dog."

"Go back to your place!" said Harry, sternly "there has been murder enough. Whatever excuse there might have been for Stephen Roberts with his fanaticism, there is none for you. What you did was an act against one who had saved your life, and had been kind and friendly to you since you first met him; and you did it for money. Go on!"

Brownell said no more. He dropped his chin on his breast and walked slowly back to the fire, followed by Harry.

"Tie him up again," said the latter to Squire Boone, "and for heaven's sake, don't let either of them escape!"

"I have done nothing, Mr. Calvert," cried Hunter, in a whining voice, from his place on the ground; and rising as he added, slowly, "I had nothing to do with it but to stand there and hold his gun. He didn't tell me what he was going about."

"You lie, you cowardly hound!" roared Brownell. "You knew all about it, and knew enough to fix a good stiff price on what little you had to do."

Pained and disgusted at this scene, Harry turned on his heel and rejoined his companions.

It was by this time late, and he found that the others had disposed themselves for the night, and were most of them sleeping soundly; he accordingly soon followed their example.

The next morning Harry communicated to Judge

Anderson and his uncle, alone, the statement that had been made to him by Brownell. Their expressions of amazement and horror at the cold-blooded villainy and wonderful skill of the plot which had thus so fortunately miscarried, were as emphatic as had been his own.

After this conference was over, the Judge called all the men of the party together to consult on the disposition to be made of the two prisoners. Boone and the Squire were for improvising a court, trying, convicting, sentencing, and hanging them on the spot ; but to this course, however, though considering where they were and the rather lax legal customs of frontier life, Judge Anderson would not consent.

"We are too near the settlements to render that necessary," he said. "It will not take long to get them to Hillsborough, where they can be properly tried."

It was accordingly decided that this disposition of the two should be made, and the attention of all was next directed to preparations for the burial of the unfortunate victim of Stephen Roberts' mad conspiracy.

It was determined to bury poor Rafe where he fell—by the side of the overhanging chestnut tree, where the grassy slope inclined to the waters of the river below.

Here a grave was dug ; and in the quiet sunny afternoon the body of their murdered friend was tenderly carried thither, and deposited in its last resting-place, bedewed with the tears of the only friends he had in the whole world.

The grave was filled and sodded over, and a rude

cross, with the united initials R. S. and G. H. cut upon it, was placed at its head.

The last rays of the setting sun, as it was gradually being lost to view behind the mountain-tops, gilded the grave of that self-sacrificing, noble, and lonely spirit, as his friends who mourned his loss with a sorrow that was not to be comforted, gathered together their belongings and hastened from the ill-omened spot.

Conducting their two prisoners with their hands tied, but their limbs free to walk, and with the women of the party mounted on the horses which had been brought by Judge Anderson's party, all hastened their steps, and at nightfall they were miles away from the scene of the exciting incidents which thus sadly concluded their journey into the wilds of Kentucky.

CHAPTER XXVI.

The return of the adventurers. A sad meeting, but a warm greeting. Battles are fought over again ; the past is related ; the present is enjoyed, and the happiness of at least two of the party is secured for the future.

THAT was a sorry company that, late one hazy afternoon toward the end of October, 1771, wound along the road that led across the bridge where we first introduced Harry Calvert and Maude O'Brien, and so on up to the drive-way which led to Squire O'Brien's mansion.

They were all worn, sun-burned and travel-stained. Their clothing had been torn by brambles and soaked by rains. Though the industrious needles of Maude and Mademoiselle Raimonde had been plied frequently and to good purpose, not all their care and labor had prevented the display, in many instances, of garments ripped and tattered.

First came Daniel Boone striding along, erect and eagle-eyed as ever, with his rifle swung over his shoulder, and close beside him Mike Dooley, externally the worse for his long journey, but with his eye bright and glistening, possibly with a stray tear of joy at reaching home again.

After them came Thomas Hardeman, Squire Boone,

and then a cavalcade of five horses. On the foremost of these rode Maude, by whose side marched Harry Calvert, his hand occasionally resting on the pommel of her saddle. Next to them was Mlle. Raimonde, and then Rose, who could ride as well as a boy, and who carried, strapped about the horse on which she sat, a good part of the luggage of the entire company.

Following these were Judge Anderson and Squire O'Brien, also on horseback. And then was exhibited the painful sight of the two men, Brownell and Hunter, who struggled on, limping, and with their hands tied behind them, closely guarded by the three men who had come up from Granville with Judge Anderson.

After they had crossed the bridge, the motley party could be plainly seen from the great house, and at once the piazza was filled with people, while from the negro quarters and outbuildings gathered the house-servants and the hands, and loud cries and cheers of welcome went up from all of them.

The returned wanderers waved their hats and their hands in acknowledgment of these salutations; but it did not take long for those who were watching them—some of whom hastened down from the piazza to meet them—to recognize that this return was not altogether joyous and satisfactory.

There was something about the manner of the entire party which showed that there had been in their recent experience some saddening occasion.

Lady O'Brien came to meet the Squire half-way, and was followed by the rector and Mr. Rawlings, who had

but just arrived, bringing his lady, for their customary autumn visit.

Welcoming greetings now passed from one to the other with all the warmth that could be desired, even Maude coming in for a show of affection from her mother which she had not expected, and which drew tears from her eyes.

All were engaged in shaking hands and asking and answering questions rapidly, when suddenly the rector, who had been looking about for a moment, turned to Harry, and said :

“ But where is Mr. Slaughter ? ”

There was a dead silence. Then the Squire took Dr. Bullock aside, and briefly related to him an outline of the facts connected with the assassination of Rafe, while the same story was told by the others of the party. The unexpected news that the courageous and noble-hearted secretary had fallen a victim to the wicked schemes of Stephen Roberts, greatly dampened the spirits of those who were so happily appreciative of the return of their friends.

But as the first effect of this communication wore off and all were gathered about the piazza and in the drawing and sitting rooms conversing earnestly on the many events of the last two years, a more satisfactory spirit was aroused, and the worn-out pioneers began at last to really appreciate the comfort and joy of coming home.

Meanwhile, the two prisoners had been placed in a secure apartment, where they were carefully watched

and where they would remain until it should be decided to remove them to Hillsborough for trial.

During the evening, and when all had been served with a substantial supper, and sat about the great fires in the halls and drawing-rooms, the sense of security and association which impressed the travelers, was most grateful to their senses, so long unaccustomed to any society but their own, and so long obliged to keep their senses on the alert from the expectation of impending danger.

There had been a general ransacking of wardrobes and clothing-chests, and considerable amusement was felt and expressed at the varied attire in which the new arrivals had attired themselves.

Maude had hesitated long before accepting her father's urgent invitation to return to Mount Mourne.

On their journey they had stopped at Boone's place, both to give him an opportunity of seeing his family, and to enable Maude to make such changes in her attire as could be effected there. They remained on the Yadkin a day and a night ; and while there Boone and Harry had made their report to Judge Anderson and the Squire, and the former had willingly acknowledged the success of their mission and the importance of the conclusions which they had reached, and which decided him, and would, as he believed, decide his associates, to complete the prosecution of their scheme by negotiating for the purchase of the lands which Boone and Harry had examined.

During their absence Judge Anderson had fulfilled

the promise he had made to Boone to charge himself with the support of the latter's family, and had regularly supplied them with whatever was necessary for their sustenance and comfort.

This little pause in their journey gave them a period of rest, and enabled Squire O'Brien to use the arguments necessary to induce his daughter to return with him to her home.

He took upon himself the responsibility of assuring Maude of a warm welcome from her mother, and no further interference with her plans for the future, as to which he had become her staunch adherent. The knowledge he had acquired of the manly course of Harry Calvert, and his recognition of the respect in which the young man was held, both by Daniel Boone and Judge Anderson, had strongly impressed the Squire, whose affections had always leaned toward his nephew, and he was now determined that there should be no further trouble in their household on his account.

Maude at length yielded, and as Mlle. Raimonde would go anywhere her young mistress desired, and as Harry had already been won over by his uncle, there was nothing further to detain or deter them, and the otherwise unaccountable appearance at Mount Mourne of these principal characters in our narrative is thus easily explained.

To return to the scene of placid comfort and satisfaction which marked the night of their arrival, nothing was wanting in hospitality and unremitting attention on the part of those whose pleasant duty it was to en-

tertain them, to insure an agreeable occasion for the unexpected guests.

Her Ladyship outdid herself in attendance on their wants, and manifested a spirit of solicitude and recognition of their past trials, dangers, and afflictions, which was eminently creditable to her, and was appreciated by those who were the gainers by it.

As Maude reclined in an easy-chair and gazed into the fire, while her lover, close beside her, murmured words of tenderness and affection in her ear; and as she looked about over all the kindly and loving faces of those who were grouped about her, she could not but feel that the past months of excitement and hardship had been to her at least a period of probation.

"Harry, dear," she said, as this thought flashed upon her, and her sweet face became serious and even solemn as she spoke, "there is one thing which I could not understand, but which is now made plain to me."

"And what is that, dear?" said her lover.

"Why, since I have known of what our poor friend had done for you before we ever set out on this journey, it has seemed strange to me that he should have permitted the enterprise to go on when he could have made us all so happy at once by declaring his intention with regard to you."

"Why do you say me alone?" asked Harry. "Surely you must know that you are equally interested with me in Rafe's act, and even that it probably would not have been accomplished had it not been for his interest in you as well as in me."

Maude blushed, and pressed her lover's hand a little as she went on :

"This has seemed strange to me, dear, and I have even thought that had he acted thus, it would not only have been kinder to us in sparing us so much that we have encountered, but that it would also—and that, of course, is far, far more important—have preserved to us and to himself his valuable life.

"But now," she went on after a pause, "I seem to understand it all. By this act, by permitting us to continue in the plan we had marked out for ourselves; by not interfering with your determination, so resolute and so energetic; he enabled us both to show of what kind of material we were composed."

"Yes, Maude, you are right," said Harry gravely. "By this course he permitted you to display, as you could have done in no other way, your unwavering fidelity to me, and a degree of love and of courage based upon love unexampled, I believe, in history."

Maude made a deprecating movement with her disengaged hand and continued :

"And then, too, we must remember that since he united himself with us in our enterprise, since he voluntarily took upon himself the responsibility and the arduous duties which were involved in the charge of such a burden as I must have been to him, there could have been nothing but the purest unselfishness and the sweetest tenderness and affection for us to have impelled him to the course he pursued. And, dear," she continued, her eyes filling with tears, "I know that I am a better

woman, and will make a truer and better wife to you and I know you are a better and braver man for all this that Rafe did for us."

"You are entirely right, Maude. I had felt some of the impressions which affected you; and though I viewed them from a man's stand-point, I think I had almost reached the same conclusions.

"I can understand now something that appeared in the manner of Rafe Slaughter on the day when I received intelligence of my disinheritance, which I did not comprehend before.

"I believe that at that moment his first impulse was to disclose himself, and to offer some provision for us which should render unnecessary the step I then announced my determination to take. But his far-seeing judgment told him that to permit me to continue in the course I had laid down for myself, and to trust to Providence that all would come right in the end, would be better and wiser and more certain to produce a happy and perfect result; and that he was right, though so sadly and unfortunately for himself, is now manifest to both of us."

The two sat silent after this for some time, while they listened to the conversation that was going on about them, and in which all from time to time united.

At last, as this long and happy evening was drawing to a close, Judge Anderson rose where he was sitting between Daniel Boone and the Squire, and desiring the attention of those present for a moment, placed his hand on the shoulder of the hunter and spoke as follows:

“My friends, while we are all here together, many of us warmly recognizing and appreciating the safety which has been granted them in the face of many dangers, I desire to announce my entire satisfaction with the manner in which so much of this enterprise as I instigated has been carried out.

“My friend Daniel Boone has added greatly to his reputation by the success with which he has accomplished the dangerous and difficult task which I set him more than two years ago; and which, during nearly all of that time, he has been engaged in prosecuting.

“His report to me has confirmed my views, and will, I am certain, be accepted by those who are concerned with me; and in complimenting him I am glad to unite with his the name of my young friend, Mr. Calvert, who so bravely set forth alone to find him, succeeded in doing so, and accompanied him throughout his perilous journey, sustaining him nobly by his courage and by his friendly counsel.

“It will be my duty and pleasure, as will be the case with my associates, of whom my friend the Squire here is one, to see that such provision is made for Mr. Calvert as shall amply reward him for his share in this important undertaking.

“As for Daniel Boone, we have always been friends, and our friendship is now more staunch and well founded than before.”

Grasping the hand of the hunter, he continued:

“He will be associated with me hereafter in this purpose, and will continue to direct whatever pioneer

action shall be required in carrying it out. I may properly add that it will not be long before I shall call upon him to act for me in the final transaction by which I expect to acquire for our organization the vast tracts of territory over which he has lately passed, and concerning which his report is so satisfactory."

As the Judge concluded, there was a general movement, and most of those present pressed eagerly forward to grasp the hand of the honest hunter, who could not help showing some signs of diffidence as he acknowledged the compliments which were showered upon him, and as to which Harry Calvert came in for a large share.

The party presently broke up for the night.

On the following day Judge Anderson and his Granville followers left Mount Mourne, taking with them their two prisoners, designing to incarcerate them in the jail at Hillsborough, where they would remain until term time, which would occur in a few weeks.

To dispatch finally this portion of our narrative, it may be stated that the two men were tried at Hillsborough, another judge sitting on the bench, Judge Anderson declining on account of his intimate connection with the case, and of the fact that his services were required as a most important witness.

During the trial, the whole course of Stephen Roberts with regard to the murdered Rafe Slaughter was laid bare, and the various papers bearing upon it were put in as evidence.

The result of the trial was that Brownell was convict-

ed of murder in the first degree, and sentenced to be hanged ; a sentence which was carried into effect within ten days of the time when it was pronounced. His companion, Hunter, was found guilty of being an accessory, and by arrangement with the proper authorities was sent to England, where he was imprisoned for life at hard labor.

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Judge Anderson had not been permitted to take his departure from the hospitable mansion of Mount Mourne until a promise had been exacted from him that he would return at the Christmas holidays with Mrs. Anderson and his daughter Jessie, whom we introduced to the reader in an early chapter ; and that they would be present at the ceremony of marriage between Maude O'Brien and Harry Calvert, which was to be solemnized on Christmas Eve at the residence of the bride's father.

This agreement on the part of the Judge was carried out punctiliously ; and on Christmas Eve, 1771, there were assembled at Mount Mourne all of those personages with whom the reader is now familiar ; and then and there Harry and Maude were made man and wife.

At this ceremony Thomas Hardeman acted as best man, and sweet Jessie Anderson, with one of Hardeman's sisters and one or two other young ladies of the neighborhood, filled, with a due sense of their importance, the position of bridesmaids.

The festivities of this occasion were the talk of the surrounding country for years afterward, and among the servants of the neighboring planters, with whom Mike Dooley became forever after a hero, and Rose a heroine, no such wonderful event was ever remembered as the Christmas wedding of Harry Calvert and Miss Maude.

CHAPTER XXVII.

"On Watauga." Daniel Boone appears in a new character, and the Reader is present on an important historical occasion. The narrative fittingly concludes at the grave of one of its chief personages.

IN the month of March, 1775, and on the 17th day of that month, a strange and picturesque scene was being enacted on the banks of the Watauga River, at a point located where that stream has not yet left the boundary-line of North Carolina.

Here a level plateau, but little covered with forest growth, extended for several miles in all directions.

To the east two gigantic peaks reared their tall forms, five thousand and more feet in the air. The clear and beautiful waters of the Watauga flowed with a rapid current from its source in the adjoining hills, northward, toward its confluence with the Holston, in Eastern Tennessee. The ground was carpeted with soft, wavy grass, brilliant with the first green of spring.

Almost forming a perfect amphitheater, about whose outlines the foot-hills rose to the more elevated range beyond, in defined terraces, it would seem as though this spot had been exactly fitted by Nature for the scene of some important action on the part of man.

And the surroundings and accessories on the occasion we are about to describe, were such as would have

speedily informed the curious spectator that some transaction of grave moment was about to be completed.

The situation was dramatic in the extreme.

At a point on the plain, lying near the bank of the stream, rude preparations had apparently been made for the conduct of some ceremonial, the nature of which, however, the appearances did not indicate.

Here a few rough logs and carelessly hewn boards had been put together in the form of a table; beside which, sections sawn from the trunk of a tree were placed to serve the purpose of seats.

At present, no one was sitting upon them, but on the table were pens, ink, and paper, arranged as though preliminary to the execution of some important legal act.

Standing a short distance from the table was a group of Indians, who, by the care that had been displayed in their attire, and by their proud and stately carriage, would have been rightly judged to be warriors and chiefs of high position and repute.

They were, in fact, Cherokee chiefs; and the absence of war-paint from their countenances, and their generally peaceful aspect, showed that whatever might be the meaning of their presence here, and the nature of their mission, it was not of a warlike character.

Standing about singly, clustered together in groups, lying about upon the ground, or crouched in a frequent Indian attitude, were gathered hundreds of Cherokee warriors, perhaps to the number of a thousand; some engaged in conversation in low tones, others simply gazing about with that air of stolid indifference to ex-

ternal things which has ever been so peculiarly a characteristic of the North American Indian races.

They were garbed in many costumes and were brilliant in many hues.

Over the buckskin hunting-shirt, with its deep-fringed border, was hung in some instances a broad belt extending from the shoulder to the waist, woven with wampum and porcupine quills dyed in various colors, and to which was hung the wearer's powder-horn, often richly ornamented, or his gaudy shot-bag or tobacco-pouch.

Some of these warriors were clad, outside the hunting-shirt, in blankets of different colors, that hung from the shoulder to the ankles.

A portion of them carried rifles, but the larger number held in their hands long bows, and the deerskin pouch for the arrows showed the feathered tips of these projectiles rising above the left shoulder.

The chiefs were profusely ornamented by head-gears of feathers; and beads and wampum in different combinations adorned various parts of their persons.

Turning from inspection of these wild and restless denizens of the forest, the eye would have been caught by another group, differing widely in the characteristics of those who composed it, from the ones we have described.

They stood apart from the Indians, and were engaged in conversation among themselves.

Prominent among them would have been recognized the towering figure of Daniel Boone, who stood a little

away from the others, and as he leaned up on the muzzle of his rifle, regarded the scene stretched out before him, placidly, but evidently not with indifference.

To the Kentucky pioneer this day was that of the culmination of his labors, and the result of his dangers and privations during six years of almost continuous service in the wilderness, and of constant battle with the savage hordes infesting it.

Many times had his life been in imminent danger, and been spared, as it seemed, almost by providential intervention.

He had been captured by the Indians and held a prisoner months at a time—and escaped at last. A general warfare was now in process of being undertaken by the Colonists against their savage foes; it was but a month previous that the news of the battle of Lexington thrilled the American people with the first impulse of the struggle for liberty which was impending; already the predictions of Stephen Roberts—that a general outbreak was close at hand—was about being established by historical facts;—but up to this time, Daniel Boone had not been drawn into the vortex of political disturbance, but had held steadily and conscientiously to the prosecution of the important mission which had been confided to his charge—and whose final consummation was about to take place.

Staunch, conscientious, daring, and resolute, the hardy pioneer could gaze to the westward in the direction of thousands of square miles of territory, and say: “I have wrested this vast expanse of land from its sav

age owners, to bequeath it as a precious heritage for the enriching of future generations."

That possibly some conception of the grandeur of his career in its ultimate results, passed through the mind of Daniel Boone, as he stood regarding the preparations for the ceremonial about to take place, is not inconsistent with the thoughtful nature of the man.

Near to him stood our old friend Harry Calvert; and beside him, her beautiful face and graceful figure easily to be recognized, though the latter had rounded somewhat into matronly proportions, and resting upon his arm, was his sweet wife, whom the reader has followed in her fortunes and misfortunes as Maude O'Brien.

Harry had filled out into the proportions of a man of affairs, as was proper in the case of one who for several years had farmed extensive tracts of land in the neighborhood of the Clinch River, and of the burial-place of his cousin, while he waited for the slow processes which should eventually put him in possession of his "promised land."

The remaining persons who made up the group of whites, were: Thomas Hardeman, in whose sweet-faced and blushing companion the reader would have no difficulty in recognizing Jessie Anderson, whose pretty, girlish prattle had served to entertain Daniel Boone during his memorable visit to the estate of her father, now more than six years ago. The bridesmaid of Mount Mourne had become herself a bride two years later, and Thomas Hardeman had brought her to wit-

ness the final act in the enterprise in which he had himself been no idle actor.

Near this party, and evidently in attendance upon its members, was Mike Dooley, a little grizzled, and showing the effect of advancing years, but with as jolly a countenance and as humorous a twinkle in his gray eyes as ever.

This completed the party, the gentlemen of which had been duly accredited by the "Proprietors of Transylvania" that were to be, to represent their interests in the treaty with the Cherokees which was presently to be completed; and in which Daniel Boone was to be the principal agent of the purchasers of the lands to be deeded by this instrument, his two companions acting as witnesses to his signature.

The positions of the various personages who were about to transact this important business, were now suddenly changed at a word from Boone.

Desiring the others of his party to accompany him, he approached the rude table—a movement which was at once imitated by the group of Cherokee chiefs who stood near, and who were accompanied by an interpreter.

Seating himself—an action in which he was at once imitated by the others—and drawing from a pouch which hung at his side, a document in two copies, engrossed upon parchment, Boone proceeded to read it aloud in English. On concluding, he handed it to the interpreter, who in turn translated it into the Cherokee tongue, while the chiefs listened in grave silence to the enumeration of its provisions.

The specific description of the lands to be sold by the Cherokees to Judge Anderson and his associates, as contained in the Treaty, was as follows: "All that tract of land beginning at the mouth, or junction of the Kentucky or Louisa River with the Ohio; thence to the source of the former; thence south, into Tennessee, until a westward line shall cross the Cumberland mountains so as to strike the ridge which divides the waters of the Tennessee from those of the Cumberland; and with that ridge to the Ohio River; and with that river to the mouth of the Kentucky or Louisa River again."

The instrument being read and accepted by the agreeing parties, nothing remained to be done but to affix to each copy the signatures of those executing it, and of the witnesses.

This occupied some time, each chief having to place in its proper position in the document against the name by which he was known, his "totem" or sign-manual; but at length the act was concluded by all concerned, and the Treaty of Watauga was an accomplished fact.

Then, with cordial hand-shakes, frequent ejaculations of "How! How!" and general leave-taking, the contracting parties separated, and the scene of this characteristic transaction was in a few hours silent and deserted.

Boone and his party entered the wagon by which they had all traveled from their settlement on the Clinch River, and were speedily being driven by Mike Dooley on their road homeward.

Then the Indians took up their line of march toward their village in the far southwest.

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On a lovely moonlight evening, perhaps a week later, Maude and Harry stood beside the grave of their dead friend and benefactor.

It lay within the bounds of their own estate, and had been carefully tended, and the sod above it bloomed with the first flowers of spring. At its head was a plain gray stone shaft, on which was inscribed—after the record of his name and years—this sentiment :

HE | WAS | FAITHFUL | UNTO | DEATH.

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